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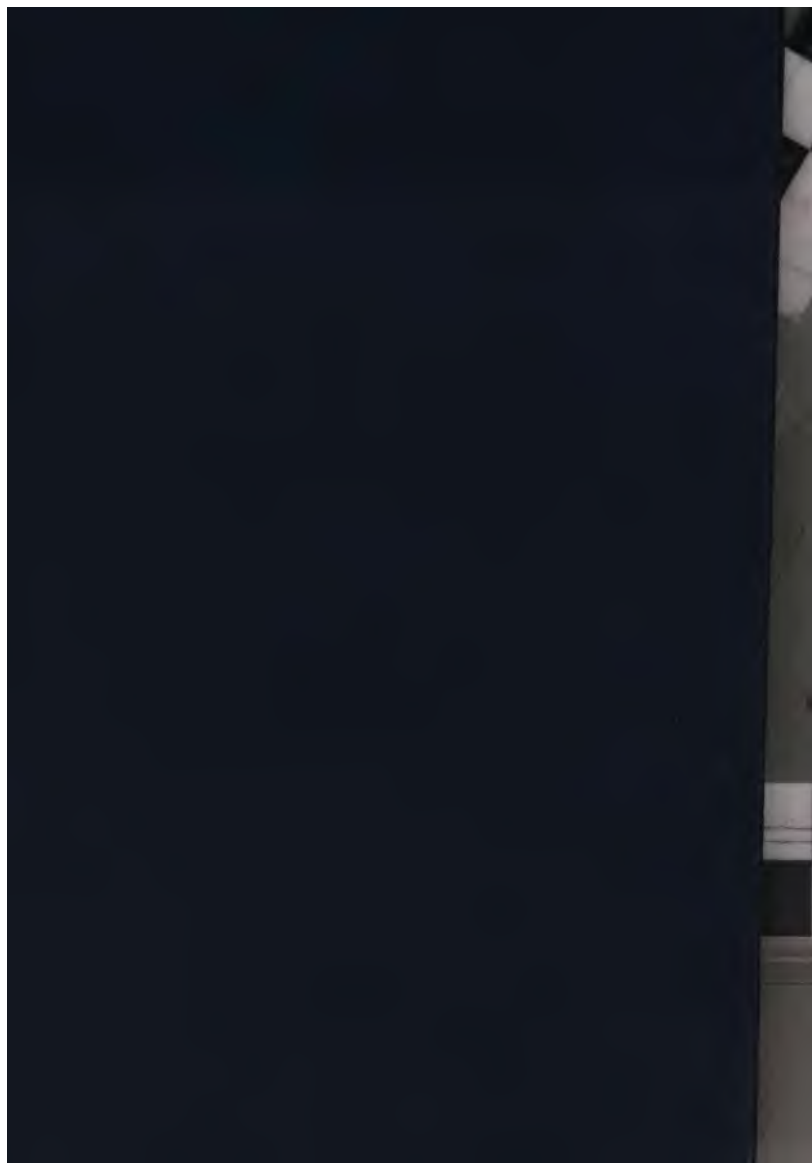
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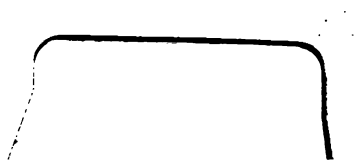
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HOLIDAY TASKS

BEING

ESSAYS WRITTEN IN VACATION TIME

BY

JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "HIGH SPIRITS," "BY PROXY," ETC. ETC.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1887.

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HOLIDAY TASKS.

OUT OF HARNESS.

WHEN horses leave the shafts they have various ways of accepting the gifts of leisure and liberty. Some, with drooping ears and staggering gait, repair forthwith to their stables and go to sleep (I am credibly informed by equine friends) standing. This is a case that has no human parallel. The behaviour, however, of many of these animals on leaving work is similar enough to that of mankind under the like circumstances. Some rush at once to drink; some instantly begin to browse, and never seem to have their fill of flesh (for flesh is grass); some kick up their heels, and hinny an invitation to the fair sex to join in their gambols. These creatures, like the majority of mankind, appreciate a holiday. On the other hand, there are some who when once the stage-waggon, or the omnibus, ceases to thunder at their heels appear to have no *raison d'être*. When their cumbrous harness has been removed, they shiver and

stand abashed, as if overcome with a sense of indelicacy. They stretch their necks (astonished that they can stretch them) this way and that, and poke their moist, cold noses into stray substances with a puzzled air. Their time is their own; but what on earth, they say to themselves, as they lay their long, but not very sagacious, heads together, are they to do with it? Their occupation is drawing, and that gone, they have no other accomplishments. They see their fellow-creatures rolling on the earth with their four legs in the air—a proceeding which strikes them as ridiculous without being amusing. Such high spirits are inexplicable to them. They are old stagers, and when they are off the stage they lag superfluous.

There is many a hard-working Paterfamilias who takes his holiday with similar disrelish, and to whom the regulation autumn outing, in particular, is anything but agreeable. He has experienced a good many long vacations in what is beginning to be called his “career,” a term which has a retrospective sense, like the “he flourished” of the annalist—and, upon the whole, he prefers Term Time. When the mind has become mature (and the body, perhaps, not quite so elastic as it used to be) we recognise the fact that enjoyment consists mainly in comfort, and that there can be no real pleasure without it.

Now, comfort is seldom found in connection with *change*, and least of all in change of residence. If

house advertisements in the spring were things to be trusted indeed, Elysium ought to be found in every county. One would think that every house was the House of Lords, and that Lord Salisbury had framed the description of it. But Paterfamilias has long lost his illusions about all those "eligible residences for the summer months," whether at the seaside or in the country, or even (as presented to him in this present year of grace) "situated in a town hallowed by historical associations, and within the shadow of one of our most stately cathedrals." He knows, without personal inspection, that that "magnificent mansion on the East Coast, standing in park-like grounds, and possessing a perfect seclusion," has been at no distant period a lunatic asylum; he scents afar the nature of that "spacious dwelling-house in a southern county, making up, if required, no less than six-and-twenty beds, to be let, for six weeks, a bargain." Though the proprietor has rather drawn upon his imagination for the "expanse of wood and verdure," which is a playground with one tree, he has absolutely underrated the extent of his sleeping accommodation, which, if you do not mind "dormitories," with twelve in a room, is practically limitless; the house (out of the vacation) is that well-known academy for young gentlemen, Blimber Lodge.

For poetic description, however (the vigour and audacity of which I am inclined to ascribe to the

effects of sea air), there is nothing to equal the description of the seaside residence. If by craning out of one's attic window, or by coming right out on the drawing-room balcony, a glimpse of the sea can be procured, the householder has no hesitation in entitling his property "Ocean View."

When the necessity of the case compels him to give up this marine advantage, his mansion is always "within two minutes of the sea," at the very furthest; if his advertisement says "ten minutes," the notion of reaching the beach, except on wheels, may be abandoned. As for the Belles Vues, and Paradise Prospects, and Mount Pisgahs, there is nothing particular to be said of them save that by any other name they would smell as sweet (though, unfortunately, not sweeter), and would be certainly no less accurately described. Opinion differs about what constitutes a good view, and this is especially the case between landlord and tenant. Their ideas of accommodation, too, are often at variance. With the former, whatever article will contain a human being in a recumbent but motionless position is a bed; while whatever will permit him to turn therein without tumbling out of it, is two beds. One hears a good deal of the school of Wordsworth and the school of Byron, and I have no wish to detract from their reputation, but as regards the higher flights of imaginative literature—the art of "*making the thing that is not as the thing that is*"—their in-

genuity is not to be compared with that of their respected contemporary, Mr. George Robins.

I am not, of course, speaking of lodgings, to the embellishment of which, by advertisement, that great man never descended. The Paterfamilias I have in my mind has given far too many hostages to fortune to admit of their being placed in furnished apartments: at least, that is what he replies to any sympathetic friend who, noting his anxiety of mind at this season of migration, inquires, "Why not go into lodgings?" The fact is he has tried that; it was, it is true, a long time ago, but he is not likely to forget it, especially the cooking. The one fixed idea, indeed, in his otherwise wavering and dubious mind is, "Wherever I go, unless it is across the seas, I take my cook."

In justice to Materfamilias, not to say in mercy to himself (for if there is one thing that that admirable and long-suffering lady can not stand it is London in August), he must go somewhere, and some arguments occur to him in favour of foreign travel. If that is decided on, he saves the "flitting;" the packing up of everything that makes home habitable; the blockade of every domestic thoroughfare for days beforehand with arks of luggage; the despatch of his plate to the banker's; the exodus of the servants in advance, and the wilderness they leave behind them. On the other hand, there are the terrors of travel.

If comfort is inconsistent with change, it is absolutely incompatible with prolonged locomotion. Paterfamilias may cross the Channel, but he cannot ensure fine weather for doing it; he may engage a "sleeping car," and yet not be able to sleep in it. Then there is the "confounded language"—a strong word, but the very same, be it remembered, that was applied to the alien tongues that were let loose after the erection of the Tower of Babel. As a general rule Paterfamilias confesses that he does not speak French "with facility," he can only "read French;" concerning which latter accomplishment I will merely say that it is fortunate he has not to gain his living by translation.

His taking his holiday abroad is, therefore, an almost similar proceeding to that of becoming for the autumn voluntarily dumb. It may be said—indeed it *is* said—that "the waiters speak English;" but, even if they do possess this talent, is it worth Paterfamilias's while to travel day and night for six-and-thirty hours at a stretch to talk to a German waiter? Moreover, before he gets to him he will probably have a word or two with a German guard, which is little likely to prove agreeable. I have understood, indeed, from travellers in the United States that its railway officials bear the palm for discourtesy and insolence even over that of Germany; but I think this must be an *exaggeration*. A more unsatisfactory condition of affairs

can, at all events, hardly be imagined than the giving a piece of one's mind to a German guard with the consciousness that he doesn't understand a word of it.

Then there is the imprisonment, like herded cattle, in frowsy railway waiting-rooms; the seeking after his luggage, and the losing of it; the filthy food, diversified by an occasional meal at Paris or elsewhere, which by contrast appears "a feast for the gods;" and the alteration in his appointed hours for eating, drinking, and sleeping—though the last, indeed, is of little consequence by reason of the mosquitoes. When Paterfamilias thus recalls his reminiscences of foreign travel, he becomes patriotic, doubts whether it is right for people to take so much money out of the country every summer, and decides, since he is out of harness, to go to grass at home.

If he could do it at his own house, with all his comforts about him, he would secretly be very well satisfied with that arrangement. I know, indeed, of few better ways of spending a holiday than to take it in London when "everybody that is anybody" is out of town; when we have the club to ourselves, and its whole staff of waiters at our disposal, and when we have complete leisure for investigating that interesting metropolis of which very few of us know so much as our country cousins. This is not, however, to be thought of by Paterfamilias, who dares not so

far defy domestic opinion. His area of choice having been narrowed to England, the next question that arises is whither shall he go? The country, he knows, is out of the question; to look out on the same field, the same tree, the same cow, from his dressing-room window every morning would, with the razor ready to his hand, be dangerous to his very life; the fate of "Sir John Plumpudding, of the Grange, who hung himself one morning for a change," would, he is well aware, be his own before the week is out. The sea, on the other hand, has something in it of variety. There are ships and things (the variety does not amount to much when he comes to think of it), and there will be a club where he can get some whist. He ventures to propose Brighton—but that, as he expected, is negatived by the home authorities at once. "Why, it is almost the same as London" (his very reason for choosing it), "and with not an inch of shade." St. Leonard's, Eastbourne, Scarborough, are each proposed in turn; he knows and hates them all with a sacred hatred.

"But you seem to dislike every place," says Materfamilias remonstratingly. "Well, you see, my dear," he answers despairingly, "we've *been* everywhere. Suppose you and Matilda" (their eldest daughter) "choose a house somewhere, and don't let me hear a word about it till the day we go there. Let it come upon *me like a delightful surprise.*"

After innumerable journeys to see the most posterous houses that ever embellished an advertisement list, the ladies fix on Shingleton, and Paterfamilias does his last day's work, and with dark forebodings follows them thither by the afternoon express. "While the servants are getting the house ready, and the luggage is being unpacked, he feels," he says (though this consideration only meets with very moderate approval), "that he shall only be in the way."

Such are his sentiments on getting "out of harness." How he fares "at grass" must be reserved for another day.

AT GRASS.

FOR the first twelve hours after Paterfamilias has arrived at Shingleton all is *couleur de rose* with him. Hope, which springs eternal in the human breast, leads him to imagine, though he has detested the five-and-twenty seaside resorts which he has visited during his earthly pilgrimage, that Shingleton will be the exception. It is a bright little place when the sun shines, and has exceptionally good houses, which are let for three months in the year to visitors for twice the annual rent that is paid for them by the residents. There is an old town and a new; the former narrow and inconvenient, and with so steep a street that, if you meet a friend in it, you cannot stop to speak with him without laying hold of some immovable body (such as a lamp-post) to steady you. There are places of worship to suit every eccentricity of the human mind, besides a standing Salvation Army. There is a pier, according to the local authorities, "in active construction," but which has made no visible progress for a quarter of a century. Once a week or so on its *projecting stump* a steamer lands its passengers from the

Continent, or an excursion-boat starts, heralded by gigantic posters headed "Six Hours at Sea." The latter is patronized solely by the natives, the visitors being of far too aristocratic a type to indulge in cheap trips.

Beside these two classes there are the musicians, who form a considerable portion of the population. There is, of course, a German band, two "military bands"—it is not known to what branch of the defenders of our country they belong, but they are in uniform—and there is the town band. For six days in the week music at Shingleton never ceases; on Sundays, though while it lasts there is no falling off in point of volume, it is fitful; upon that day the place has to content itself with the Salvation Army band. These disciples of harmony take care not to interfere with one another; they play at the same time, but at such a well-regulated distance that there is no discord; the fading notes of one meet the fading notes of another, as it were, on neutral ground. Unfortunately, there is no margin, so that if it is necessary to carry on a conversation in the open air you must walk a mile or so out of Shingleton to do it.

Paterfamilias, strolling out upon the cliff, with a cigar in his mouth, after a late dinner, served by his own cook, enjoys the music immensely; thinks the moonlight on the water charming, and expresses himself in most favourable terms of land and sea. There

is a little kink in the cable of satisfaction later on, when he finds his bed not quite what he has been accustomed to (in point of fact "lumpy"); but his first few hours at grass may, on the whole, be said to be a decided success. In the morning he is roused by a bugle at six o'clock ("as though I were a private in the Blues," he murmurs complainingly, "and had got to get up and clean my horse"), the first awakening note of the ceaseless concert.

"I think it's rather cheerful," says Materfamilias, whose angelic mission it is to make things pleasant for her lord and master, or, as she expresses it in confidence to the family circle, "to keep dear papa in good-humour with the place as long as possible." "I don't know about its being cheerful; it's deuced early," is his uncompromising reply.

At breakfast one of the military bands plays under the open window, and the meal is necessarily proceeded with in dumb show. Paterfamilias, however, is understood to say that it would have been better, under the circumstances, to have had the cloth laid in the dining-room, which is on the other side of the house. It is not considered worth while to tell him that the town band is at that moment in full blast opposite the dining-room; and Materfamilias contents herself with gently hinting (at the top of her voice) that music at meals is greatly affected by the Royal *Family*.

Still, Shingleton pleases, or, at all events, has not begun to displease. It is distinctly favourable to appetite, which again, as every smoker knows, is conducive to tobacco smoking. In harness Paterfamilias rarely smokes till after dinner; at grass he smokes the livelong day. Sooner or later he is sure to suffer from it, but no one ventures to remonstrate, lest it should evoke the bitter and pitiless retort, "And what on earth else, will you be so good as to tell me, is there here to do?" He starts in high spirits "to explore the place," as though it were the interior of Africa, or other immense space that requires one to start early in the day for its thorough investigation. This is a fatal error, for the longer that Paterfamilias, when at grass, can think about going out without absolutely doing it the better for him. At the seaside it is above all things necessary to husband one's resources.

He goes on the cliff when the German band is playing, and finds the sea looking much the same as on the previous evening, except that the sun is shining instead of the moon. He saunters through the public gardens and watches the young men and maidens playing at tennis. It is a pretty game to look at, but slightly monotonous; nor has the mind of Paterfamilias, powerful though it is reckoned in its way, ever been able to grasp what the players are driving at (except the ball), and (especially) why they

always, universally and without exception, play slap into the net at starting.

He dawdles aimlessly into the street, and here a very curious thing occurs; he finds himself attracted by the little picture-shops. In London he never gives his attention to the most ambitious establishment of this nature; emporiums of any kind, indeed, have no charms for him. But here at Shingleton he finds himself staring at the wooden block in the barber's shop, at the waxen page in the tailor's window, at the fly-blown tarts at the pastrycook's, but especially at the gratuitous exhibition of prints and photographs at the stationer's. In London he cares absolutely nothing for public favourites or professional beauties, but here his eye wanders with admiration from the photo of the *première danseuse* at the Frivolity Music Hall in very short skirts, to that of the High Church rector in very long ones. The other local clergy are all there, and Paterfamilias finds himself drawing deductions from their personal appearance as to their theological opinions. He discovers another and entirely novel source of interest in the advertisements on the walls, which are generally, however, of a posthumous character. They describe the triumphal entry of a circus into Shingleton in the early spring, and announce the address of a Methodist missionary bound for Tongataboo (and since killed and eaten), "to be followed by a collection," last October. The notices affecting the

future are wholly musical; Military Band No. 1 "will play in the Public Gardens on the 10th inst., from 5 to 7," and Military Band No. 2 "will play on the Marina" (not an instrument, but a locality) "on the 11th inst., from 8 to 10." As to the German Band and the Town Band, it is not necessary to advertise them, for they are advertising themselves the whole day long.

After three hours of this relaxation, Paterfamilias is considerably more exhausted than he has ever felt after a long day's professional work, and is glad to go in to luncheon. All meals are now a treat to him; in London they come as a matter of course, but at Shingleton, where there is nothing else to come, they are hailed with enthusiasm. Again, the arrival of the morning papers, which in town is only one of the "everyday miracles" of life, now assumes an extraordinary importance. The way in which Paterfamilias waits for the newsboy in the hall, snatches the *Times* from his hand, and retires with it to his private apartment lest his spouse should share with him even its extra sheet, is not only undignified, but reminds one of the behaviour of the lion to the lioness in the Zoological Gardens. The fact is, Paterfamilias is becoming disorganized. Besides those incipient symptoms of softening of the brain manifest in his morbid interest in the shops, his *morale* begins to suffer. The doctors talk of our "breaking down" through brain

work, which, however, unless it is attended by worry, is a very rare calamity, but they do not take into account the effects of boredom and *ennui*, the dead-weight of which upon a naturally active mind has the same effect as the drawing a sand-cart upon some high-mettled racer.

In despair at discovering anything to do for himself, Paterfamilias consults the local guide-book. He finds there a long description of Shingleton in the year of its foundation (728 B.C.) by St. Shinthin, and a short and not very respectful mention of it extracted from the Domesday Book. He is informed, of course, that Cæsar fortified it, that Queen Elizabeth made a "progress" through it, and that Charles I. slept there, and—unless beds at Shingleton have much deteriorated since his time (thinks Paterfamilias)—very badly. He learns the exact dimensions of the Town Hall, and the precise date at which the Chapel of the Particular Baptists was erected. Also, in the scientific supplement, at what spots in the neighbourhood the bristle-stalked club rush, and the strong-smelling lettuce (both, as he has good reason to believe, ingredients of the local salad) are to be discovered by the botanist. He is also furnished with the by-laws of the town in connection with the prices to be charged for wheeled conveyances, which would be really useful if the fly-men could be induced to pay the slightest attention to them. Otherwise, in that guide-book there is not,

only no performance (which may be said of many other literary efforts) but not the faintest promise in the way of interest, amusement, or utility. Without any merit of its own, it is, however, full of quotations, and one of them, in allusion to the rapturous delight of visitors in Shingleton, is the line "as happy as the day is long." Like the "pink trip slip for a three-cent fare," in Mark Twain's humorous story, this haunts the memory of Paterfamilias; he examines it with a critical eye, and perceives its fallacy; but he cannot escape from that persistent refrain "As the day is long, as the day is long." It is high August at Shingleton, but to Paterfamilias it still seems to be the 21st of June.

The days, however, are not all alike; there is, at all events, a negative change on Sundays, when the municipality are so particular—though certainly not Particular Baptists—that neither the public baths nor the bathing machines are permitted to be used. There are also wet days. On one of these unfortunate occasions the barometer of Paterfamilias's vitality sinks so low that he goes to a local phrenologist and gets his head felt. This scientific sage discovers that he is æsthetic, worships the beautiful in art, and that his favourite poet is Rossetti. Paterfamilias makes no effort at self-defence, but pockets the printed form, which, like a certificate of merit, the professor has filled up for him in return for his half-crown. "Pex-

haps the man is right," he meekly says to himself; "it is very likely that all this may have happened to me since I came to Shingleton. If I could see my own brain I believe it would look like a poached egg."

It must not be supposed that Paterfamilias does not endeavour to shake off these symptoms, and make use of such instruments of enjoyment as lie within his reach: he hires a chair at the band-meetings, he goes to see the express-train come in and the excursion-steamer go off, and he patronizes the big telescope on the Marina at twopence a peep. The latter amusement affords some scope for his imagination, for, as a matter of fact, he has never yet seen anything through a telescope, but has only professed to see things. The little shutter closes itself, or the elevation is too high, or the thing wobbles too much; and when any attempt is made to compel it to his desire by force, it kicks like a gun and hurts his eye. When the first week has come to an end, it seems to Paterfamilias that his whole existence has been divided into two equal periods, the time before he came to Shingleton and the time he has been there, and when he has been "at grass" a fortnight he begins to feel the grass growing over him.

Is it to be wondered at that he sometimes receives an opportune telegraphic summons which obliges him to tear himself from his family and their delightful *summer quarters*, and return for a few days to town,

or, to use the sympathetic words of *Materfamilias*, that "Business does not permit the poor dear fellow to enjoy a consecutive holiday even during the 'Long Vacation?'" A few days of accustomed work and of his beloved metropolis refresh him as the whale is refreshed who comes up to the surface of the sea to breathe a bit, and he goes back again to bear the superincumbent weight of the Shingleton atmosphere—about 500 tons to the square inch—with renewed vigour.

•

BACK IN TOWN.

THERE is doubtless no place like home, but there are times when home looks exceedingly unlike itself. For example, when Paterfamilias happens to return to it for a day or two when the family are away for their autumn holiday. Then the carpets are up, of course, and the curtains are down; the sitting-rooms have gone into brown holland, which is far from becoming to them; and the articles of furniture, especially the conversation chairs, look strange and weird, with sheets over them. Everything has been put into mourning, not indeed for death, but absence.

The house, emptied of so much, has suddenly become full of echoes, and its owner's voice returns to him without contradiction. If this idea strikes him for a moment, it is not because his mood is cynical; on the contrary, the absence of those he loves from the familiar places renders him unwontedly sentimental.

“Old footsteps tread the upper floors
Old faces glimmer through the doors,”

and one especially old one meeting him unexpectedly upon the stairs gives him quite a shock, before

she can explain, "Please, sir, I am only the charwoman."

A female domestic is also left behind, who has instructions to see that "master has his breakfast comfortably," but, after one experience of housemaid's toast, and the peculiar richness of her rashers of bacon, he decides to take that meal, like the rest, at his club.

At the Megatherium Paterfamilias finds the same proceedings going on as in his own home; the stately establishment is under that partial process of rehabilitation called "cleaning," which, while it does not turn its members out of doors, as "doing up" does, puts them on short commons and curtails their accommodation. They are driven from room to room, as in a beleaguered fortress, not without resistance, or at all events much grumbling; they are but few but they resent the conduct of that many-headed tyrant, the committee. They talk of a requisition, and want Paterfamilias to sign it, who declines on the grounds of the highest principle, but in reality because the inconvenience will only affect him for a day or two; for the time, however, they have his sympathy, and he particularly objects to the remissness of the club authorities in not having taken measures for providing a rubber; during August and September the librarian and the secretary might surely be instructed to complete the table. There is only one whist player in the

place, and he is far too good an one to be tackled at double dummy.

Old Gobemouche is there *en permanence*, who never plays (or works) at anything, and has not left London for fifty years. Flutterby is waiting for the demise of his grandmother, and, under the most favourable circumstances, will not find himself in funds for a trip anywhere beyond Southend till November. Mr. O'Branaghan, the Irish patriot, is also waiting for a wind of the same kind, or the means of raising it, and unfortunately he has no grandmother. The rest are only accidental or temporary inmates. They wear round hats and ditto suits, and mention casually over their dinners that they shall take their next meal in Paris. With such people it is obvious to Paterfamilias that companionship is undesirable and conversation impossible; their thoughts are fixed as it were upon another world, and they are not going to leave him anything.

The library is closed, and likewise the billiard-room, where the tables are laid out as if for interment; in the dining room, on the other hand, where they *should* have had cloths on, they are piled up with chairs, and in the very spot where great Vitellius feeds five days a week when Parliament is sitting, there kneels over her pail a scullery wench. Even that vestal flame in the roof of the inaccessible great hall, *which legend tells* is never extinguished, has gone out,

and who will that lamp relume, and how, is a problem which haunts Paterfamilias on his solitary pillow.

His business done, he flies from these scenes of desolation to the railway-station to rejoin his dear ones, but not by the nearest way; the nearest way to everywhere is "up" and scents the air with enfranchised gases. Of his experiences of the deserted "village," however, if wise, he is slow to speak, but on the whole represents it as an attractive spot from which, but for the intensity of his home affections, he could hardly have torn himself away.

A few weeks afterwards he is Back in Town for good, and not a day too early for his junior partner Spriggs, who is going to Switzerland, just in time to catch the very last of his fellow countrymen setting out for England. His house is now spick and span, and a little too much of both for comfort. The white-washers have been everywhere except where the painters have been. The drains have been thoroughly "looked to," for Materfamilias has fallen into the snares of the sanitarians, and two long air-shafts, like asses' ears, project from the domestic roof. For the first time, she says, she now feels "peace of mind" (about microbes and things); but if so, it is a mistake to suppose that peace of mind (though it must be confessed at a considerable figure) cannot be purchased.

What with one thing and another, "all absolutely necessary to be done, my love, if the house is to be

made habitable and the dear children's health to be preserved," Paterfamilias calculates that two dozen artisans have in his absence been employed on the premises; not by any means the "four-and-twenty brisk young fellows" eulogized by the poet, but persons who have certainly not spoilt their work by hurry but have taken time. One of them, it turns out, has taken something else, certain unconsidered trifles one of the young ladies has characteristically left in an unlocked jewel-drawer.

Dangerous, indeed, would it be in these days to breathe one word against the unsullied honour of the British Workman, but the occasional journeyman on the job is not always to be trusted. That, at least, is the opinion of the detective whom Paterfamilias invokes to his assistance. "When gentlemen come back to town," he says, "they mostly do find something or another a-missing. Things lie about, you see, and parties take them."

"Parties, indeed!" cries Paterfamilias (thinking in his indignation that "gangs" would be the better word), "do you mean to say that among every two dozen workmen (as in my case, for example) you expect to find at least one thief?"

"Well, not exactly a thief, sir—no," returns the detective with a deprecating smile; "but the fact is *what* we call petty larceny is rather a common offence.

Now as to these jewels of your young lady's, the party who has taken them will not, in all likelihood, sell them to a receiver, or pledge them at a pawn-broker's, as a person would do such as you have in your mind, and that is the very thing, I am sorry to say, which makes it almost hopeless to recover them.

"Then one absolutely suffers the more, it seems, from this gentleman's delicate scruples!"

"Well, so far, yes," admits the detective, still sweetly smiling, "the party pretends, you see, he has found them in a dust-heap, and gives them to his missis and the girls, and they wear them."

"They become family jewels, heirlooms in fact," observes Paterfamilias sardonically.

"Something of that, sir, yes," is the imperturbable reply; "it is very difficult for some folks to draw the line."

The line, indeed, would seem in some cases to be wholly imaginary (like the Equator), for the contents of Paterfamilias's desk he left unlocked in his study are found to be arranged in the most methodical manner, but not at all as he left them; which shows that "the party" is, or has, a neat hand. It seems, in short, extremely probable that if all the silver had not been sent to the bankers the party who is "not exactly a thief" might have annexed *that* portable property and started some family plate. When it is added that

marks of wax are discovered in the wards of the lock of the street-door, and that Materfamilias declines to sleep till another Bramah has been affixed to it, it must be confessed that the joys of being Back in Town are not wholly without alloy.

These alarms and inconveniences in due course, however, subside and are forgotten. At the top of the street Paterfamilias finds the local omnibus once more filled with the well-known faces, save a few young ones, who conforming to the classic rule *seniores priores*, are taking holiday at the back end of the year, as the weather is obviously breaking up; however, he has no reason to envy them.

At the office there are piles and piles of letters, marked by that abominable Spriggs "Very important; thought it better you should answer this yourself." It seems at first to Paterfamilias that he can never get through these arrears, but they fade and fade away in time, like snow in springtime, leaving only some wretched *débris* which is not answered at all, but carted into the waste-paper basket.

London is filling fast; even the most conventional folk, who have avoided it for the last two months as though it had been visited by the cholera morbus, now come back without a blush, unless a fine bronze warranted, like a half-guinea watch, to wear a week *at least* can be called so. The old wheels of busi-

ness and of pleasure begin to revolve in the old ruts, and, so far from having any feeling of being Back in Town, Paterfamilias begins to forget that he has ever left it.

LAID BY.

THERE are various ways recommended by various innocent Epicureans of spending a holiday, one of which, if I remember right, is to pass it in bed. This, however, must be understood as being a voluntary act (to do so because all one's clothes are pawned, for example, can hardly be a satisfactory proceeding): to take to one's bed, at the beginning of a limited vacation, for the enjoyment of perfect rest and peace, is quite another thing to the being taken there, as though to one's long home, by one's friend, one's landlord, one's chambermaid, and one's "boots." This is what has happened to me. A victim to the pursuit of antiquities and archæology (of which I know nothing, and regret that I ever wanted to know), I fell off a dolmen or a cromlech, or whatever is the Druidical name for it, in Cornwall, and have been "laid by" ever since.

It happened but a few weeks ago—my whole holiday, however, that was to have been—but time, as the poet sings, is not to be measured by the dial, but *by heart throbs*, I do not know about "heart throbs,"

but as counted by throbs in a broken knee it is very tedious. Half my life seems to have been spent in the world without—in the practice of one's profession, the promotion of the welfare of one's fellow-creatures, billiards, or what not—and half in this whitewashed chamber of the 'Boscawen Arms. Of course other people as good as myself, or nearly so, also break their knees (though hitherto I have thought the incident confined to horses) and lie in hospitals and elsewhere for even a longer period, but they do not do it during their holiday. That is my grievance. Days misspent are, of course, matters for regret, but what are these compared to lost days? As the shades of each evening fall upon the hills which I cannot climb, and on the sea on which I cannot sail, I say to myself, "There is another precious day gone." I can now appreciate the annoyance expressed by the Emperor Titus on a similar though not quite an identical occasion. To what lengths in the way of language would his Imperial impatience have carried him, if, like me, he had lost thirty days!

That my illness is a source of satisfaction to some people should no doubt be a consolation. The country doctor who attends me is distinctly gratified by it. He says every morning, "I am quite pleased, my dear Sir, with the look of your knee." I wish he had got it, as an object of constant contemplation, instead of me. I dare say he has his good points, but he is a

hypocrite; the very first day he saw me professionally, he observed, "I am afraid, my dear Sir"—he always addresses me in these terms of affection—"I am very much afraid this will be a long job;" whereas, of course, he was delighted.

The landlord of the little inn has naturally his own reasons for congratulation upon my account. Every day he comes to stare and nod, and say I am "doing nicely," as if I were a chop. I retort peevishly that matters are bad enough. "Aye, but they might have been much worse," he replies darkly; "you might have been put in the box." And then he looks at the door, which is narrow, and back again at me, who am fat, and with the remembrance of the close fit of my arrival, feet foremost, in his mind, is considering, I know, how much closer that of my departure would have been in the box aforesaid. He prides himself, as he says, on "looking ahead," and this is a problem that has occupied his attention ever since my misfortune.

To the "boots" I am a subject of the most enjoyable interest. He is a very good fellow, but he has never seen what he calls a "horsepital case" before, and it has all the attractions of novelty for him. He introduces the doctor, and then lingers apparently from motives of sympathy, but in reality in hopes of his services being required in connection with sawdust, or in *bandaging* with violence at the very least. He

is very much disappointed to learn that there is nothing for it—that is, for my knee—but rest, when so much better things might have been looked forward to; the whole affair falls very far short of his idea of “a horsepital case.” Nevertheless, “Boots” makes what he can of the affair, for the benefit of the company in the tap-room, who are dependent upon him for scientific explanation, and a description of the symptoms. He has never, as he once confessed to me, under the influence of the stimulant in question, had so many gratuitous goes of gin as since I was “laid by.”

The chambermaid, Betsy, is charmed. My misfortune reminds her of her excellent grandmother, who “slipped her knee,” as she calls it (as if it had been a greyhound), when a middle-aged woman, and never got it round again till the day of her death at ninety-six. The knee-cap, from her account, used to come off and on—a circumstance which afforded much pleasure to the children. Such a case appears to me unusual, and well worthy of the attention of the medical journals (with which I have, unfortunately, no connection, or I would report it). But it is impossible to shake Betsy’s testimony. The narrative, even so far as I can believe it, is by no means agreeable to me; but I have not a word to say against the narrator. She is the most devoted and kindest of nurses, and has made my friend and companion A,

who when I was in health was her favourite, a little jealous. When I grow sentimental over Betsy—in her absence, of course—he becomes scornful. He is a fisherman by profession—I cannot say much for his practice—and is ignorant of the Muse. When I quote from the poets, he imagines that I am making original stanzas, and despises them as everyone does despise his friend's verses.

"Oh, woman, in our hours of ease," I murmur, apostrophizing Betsy, "Uncertain, coy'——"

"Come, she is not *that*," he breaks in cynically.

"I am quoting from Scott, my dear fellow," I remonstrate:

"When pain and anguish wring the knee,
A ministering angel thee.'"

"That's not bad," he says, in deference to Sir Walter, "though there seems something queer about the grammar."

When, on the other hand, I quote with singular appropriateness from "The Black Mousquetaire,"

"There is something, I cannot tell what it may be,
About good-looking gentlemen aged twenty three,
Above all when laid up with a wound in the knee,
Which affects female hearts in no common degree,"

he objects that I am "fifty-three, if I am a day." This is what, if jealousy did not excuse it, I should call being "nasty."

Betsy apart, however, my friend is as good as gold

to me. Many a morning he pretends that there is too much sun or wind for fishing, in order that he may sit by my bedside and help to pass the weary hours. Pipe in mouth, he will stand after breakfast on the little balcony beneath my window, conversing with me in cheery tones and describing the objects which I cannot see, or can only half see. From my pillow I can command the sky, a strip of the sea, and the heads of my fellow-creatures as they pass by on wheels; I try to guess what sort of conveyance carries them, by their rate of speed. Poor sport indeed, and saddened by the thought of something else that is also going by—more noiselessly than the bicycle—my holiday. To grudge the passing time, and yet to feel the time so heavy on one's hands seems an anomaly indeed in the way of misfortune. The poor wretch in the condemned cell experiences, perhaps, something similar, but then his knee is all right, and he is not harassed by the notion of a lost vacation.

Everything else (on my bad days) seems to be lost with it, and for ever—health, strength, and the capability of enjoyment. Shall I ever put my foot to the ground again? I ask myself querulously. I know now why the poet speaks of men as “moving erect upon the earth,” in contradistinction to the method of progression (with the trifling exception of the bear) of all the lower animals. What a fine thing it must be

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to walk! Even to drive—a mode of exercise I detest—would now seem delightful. After three weeks, the doctor says, very slowly and cautiously, that “he should not be surprised,” should all go well, without complications, and “we” be very careful (as if he and I were always restraining some strong inclination to play football together), if in a fortnight’s time he saw me in “the fly.” No one who has not beheld that vehicle (which is the only conveyance for hire within ten miles) can appreciate the treat thus promised to me. Nevertheless, being brought very low, I am thankful for small mercies. It will be a great day for me, no doubt, and especially remarkable, since it is that very one on which my holiday, by rights, should end.


I have acquired a habit of observation only to be found among the North American Indians. I find myself “taking notice” of the minutest objects within my limited range of vision, as if I were once more a baby. I have the keen perception of a broker’s man for the humble furniture of my little room. I know where every article is placed, especially the positions of my bottles and bandages, in which I take an inordinate interest; I notice that in the spider’s web in the left-hand corner of the ceiling there is a dead bluebottle fly. My mind’s eye, however, is always fixed upon one point, the vanishing point of my holiday.

To distract my thoughts, my good friend has had my bed moved round, which enables me to take larger views of the world. I can now see the head of the little jetty, though not the jetty itself. The people upon it, therefore, seem to be isolated, to reside above the water on piles, like the lake dwellers. I can see a segment of the bay—not, as before, the mere horizon—with the gulls skimming across it, and now and then a red-sailed fishing boat. “O well for the sailor lad, that he sings in his boat on the bay.” So I should think. He has nothing to complain of, but should drop on his knees—a charming position in itself, if one could only take it—and be thankful. He “shouts to his sister at play,” and well he may. He is taking holiday without stint; *he* is not “laid by,” confound him.

In a boy this unconsciousness of his blessings is, perhaps, excusable, but it is quite shocking to an unbiased and dispassionate mind to see what very little store people seem to set upon their privileges, especially in the way of walking and running. If one has but the use of one's limbs, what can there be to grumble about? There is the weather, for instance. I should be ashamed of myself to complain of an occasional wet day, as my friend A does; he should think of the good the rain is doing to the country. The philosophy with which *I* bear it—ill in bed, too—should be a

reproof to him. As a matter of fact, I rather like a wet day, because even if I were not "laid by," I could not enjoy myself, and it would be a lost day out of my holiday at all events. My friend suggests that there may be just the faintest touch of selfishness in this sentiment, but there we differ; I take the hand-glass of reflection, and cannot find the remotest stain or speck of it, and I suppose I must be allowed to know my own nature better than an outsider.

He is so good as to fetch me books from the village library. Upon what principle they have been selected by the proprietor it is difficult to guess, except that (save in their bindings) they have all stood the test of time. "The Diary of a Late Physician" (who is not a very late one after all) is the newest. All the great critics say, "Give me old books; let me read them again and again; none of your literary novelties." I have my "Paradise Lost," but even with the additional attraction of its application to my own case, I find it a little dull; I have the "Pilgrim's Progress," but, like my own, it is rather slow. Christian had his difficulties—though they were only personal ones, for he left his wife and family on the parish at starting—but he was not "laid by" in his vacation. Job had boils, but not, so far as the symptoms have been detailed, anything amiss with what my doctor calls that "ticklish place," the patella. I am perfectly



satisfied with his treatment of my malady, but not of me. He takes altogether too light a view of my calamity. "Bless my soul," he says, "what if you *are* 'laid by' for a bit; it's a grievance, of course. Well, you had better write to *The Times* about it." And I have taken the doctor's advice.

SANDIFORD.

As there are some men to whom, as they grow old, the gracious inheritance of age, "reverence and the silver hair," never seems to fall, but who remain stolid, stiff, and iron grey, in a sort of petrified middle age to their lives' end, so there are certain towns which, though tolerably ancient, never become venerable or have anything of picturesqueness about them even in decay. Picturesqueness, indeed, in a town, like beauty in a woman, is comparative, and to those who have known nothing fairer, downright homeliness may have its attractions. This very summer certain young persons of my acquaintance who have been, it must be confessed, a little "spoilt" by the choicer scenery of their native isle—such as that of Cornwall, Devonshire, Wales, and the Isle of Wight—made a protracted tour through various marine localities described in our autumn advertisements as "enchanted," "exquisite," "magnificent," and "unrivalled," and returned in a state of great discouragement and disappointment, having found all barren from Dan to *Beersheba*. What struck them most was the way in

which the inhabitants—not merely the hotelkeepers, but the residents and constant visitors—“cracked up” these places, and really seemed to imagine that they were without peer.

Far be it from me to confuse with shadowed hint a life that leads melodious days at dreary Blank or noisy Asterisk, and disbelieves in Lynton or Clovelly, and, indeed, I am well aware that when the face of nature is not absolutely repulsive, habitude itself may beget in it a certain charm. For what reason some people of experience and good judgment select their friends is often inexplicable to us; the lines about Dr. Fell are quite as appropriate in a reverse sense as in that in which they are quoted, and the same thing is true of localities. We often like a place, we do not know why; we only know we do like it. That and the dislike to change—which is, at least, as strong in some people as the taste for variety is in others—must be why people come year after year to Sandiford.

Among the general public, or at all events among those with any pretensions to fashion, to express an intention of going to Sandiford for one's summer holiday evokes a smile, not of contempt, as if you had said Southend—a much underrated spot, by-the-bye, and one to which the phrase “you may go further and fare worse” is very applicable—but of amused surprise; it seems to say, “How funny! Now what on

earth can induce him to go there, I wonder?" There is no necessity to satisfy such impertinent curiosity; let it suffice that I *am* at Sandiford.

How I got there is another matter, which I would gladly disclose if I could. But the fact is, Bradshaw has boycotted Sandiford. There are some places against which that overweening and swollen despot has set his face. "You shall not get there, my friend," he seems to say to the puzzled passenger, "not if I know it, or, at all events, not in a hurry," and Sandiford is one of them. You approach it by a circuitous route, to be traced (on the map) only by the eye of an Indian; your train is "blocked" (as though it were a Parliamentary one) at the most unexpected and inconvenient spots; and just when you think you are at your journey's end, you have to get out at a miniature junction and enter a toy train, the engine of which has scarcely time to get up steam, before, with a shriek of feigned surprise, it has to let it off again, having arrived at its destination.

It brings but a dozen passengers, which is fortunate, as there is by no means "a plague of flies" at the station, and there is no omnibus. The Bullseye Arms, our principal hotel, is much too aristocratic an establishment to employ an omnibus. Like almost all Sandiford, it owes its being to the noble house of Alicompaine. The Duke of Alicompaine, Baron Bullseye, *Baronet* of the United Kingdom, Knight of the

Most Honourable Order of the Garter, and "a number of other things, of a number of other things," among which the last and least is the Lord of the Manor of Sandiford, is known in the locality—as the Duke of Wellington was wont to be known everywhere—as "the Duke." His grandfather laid the first stone of Sandiford, and made great, though not altogether disinterested, efforts to make it attractive. What notable memories haunt our watering-place it owes to him. It has not the antiquity which some towns can boast of; with all the goodwill in the world to be historical, it cannot pretend to be one of the many spots where William the Conqueror first set foot. Even Queen Elizabeth (though if guide-books are to be believed, she slept one night at every place in her dominions) could hardly have slept at Sandiford. But, thanks to the first Duke of Alicompaine, certain female branches of the Royal Family made its acquaintance, and the house they occupied is still pointed out by the loyal and grateful inhabitants.

His Grace is said to have offered a large bribe to George IV. to stay a month in the little town, but in spite of his necessities the monarch declined. He sent Beau Brummel, or so the legend runs, to see whether it could be done, and the Beau's report, who himself only remained to lunch, was unfavourable. It is difficult, indeed, to imagine either him or his royal master at the Bullseye Arms enjoying themselves.

The rooms are pleasant and beautifully clean; the beds are admirable; the charges moderate; the cooking all that man, being reasonable, can desire; indeed, one of the chief attractions of Sandiford in my eyes, is its Bullseye; but I can nevertheless imagine that the Regent and his courtiers might have had objections to make to it. The house is what is called old-fashioned, the bedroom windows open, as live oysters open, to close with precipitancy. "How do you prevent the sash coming down?" I once inquired. "Well, sir, we generally stick the Testament under it," was the frank reply. Every bedroom has a Testament, and ought to have two.

It is objected, to some seaside places that they have only two walks, one on one side, and one on the other. The detractors of Sandiford have no such charge to make against it, for it has no walks at all. When you have used up its little scrap of esplanade you have come to the end of its pedestrian capabilities; beyond it on the one side are "private grounds," forbidden to the trespasser, and on the other a waste of shingle. There are the roads, of course; but no one but the tramps, who are numerous in the neighbourhood, wants to walk on the roads. Our visitors make excursions on wheels to the "objects of interest" in the vicinity; they are not gay and fast like the fine folks at Scarborough, nor rowdy like the *holiday* people at Margate. They take an intelligent

interest in cathedrals, parks, ruins, and Druidical remains, to explore which they charter private vehicles, never mingling together, after the manner of the vulgar, in omnibuses or waggonettes at so much per head. There is a genteel sort of geniality about them too, for our elderly ladies will bow to each other out of their respective bath-chairs on the esplanade from mere sentimental sympathy, and on what is very literally "a passing acquaintance," as significant a trait perhaps as could be instanced of our good-breeding and simplicity.

There have been many efforts to assimilate Sandiford to other places on the same coast, and to give it the air of being fashionable: a pier has been built of the very slimmest and slenderest kind, with just room at the head of it for the band and a very select audience; perhaps the materials ran short in its construction, for the planks are very wide apart and would deter the timid even if they had a mind to patronize it: bath-chairs have to traverse it diagonally lest their occupants should slip through into the astonished deep. But we do not care at Sandiford for piers, nor bands, nor concerts, nor "violent delights" of any kind. We care little for any amusement, indeed, with which instruction is not blended, and I have reason to believe that Sandiford is the last place in which an orrery was exhibited with success. In the guide-book, which is fifty years old, the

town is spoken of as "a rising watering-place," just as a barrister of mature years but small employment is called a rising barrister. It has not risen yet, and never will do so. Outside its own modest limits there are the commencements of streets, terraces, and crescents, which have never got beyond the first three houses. In the last case these have an absurd appearance, as there is no obvious reason why they should begin to curve. The notices of "eligible building plots" have been renewed and renewed again; they are plots which never deceive anybody, but we paint the advertisements new every season. We do not like the confession of failure, though for my part I should not welcome success. At Sandiford only, of all seaside towns, it is still possible to dawdle and doze and dream without molestation; life has there reached the philosopher's ideal in being wholly "without its amusements." I wish I could add that that "little music" which he so strongly reprehends was also absent. It, alas, abounds; and, with the exception of the town band, is of the very worst quality. I do not know whether the performers or their instruments are most at fault, but the latter are in the last stage of decrepitude. There is a wheezy, wasted trombone, which is evidently in a consumption, though, unhappily, a lingering one; and a harp so old that it suggests the idea that it is the very one which once *hung in Tara's halls*, and has been brought hither to

utter its dying strains. This superabundance of music is the one crumpled rose-leaf which interferes with the repose and quiet joy of Sandiford. How long it will last—I mean Sandiford itself—is doubtful, for it suffers from the hunger of the sea. Year after year ocean encroaches upon it and devours it. Ancient inhabitants point with inexplicable pride to the spot where the original Bullseye Arms stood, which was swept away by the wintry waves; they beheld the catastrophe with their own eyes. His Grace of Ali-compaine had to build another hotel. Again, a London railway company ran up a terrace, or the beginning of one, of which the sea took possession in the first year, and proved a very bad tenant. The houses are in ruins. Visitors who know the law, but who do not know what has happened, imagine that they are in Chancery.

The most curious thing about Sandiford is that once a year for one week the whole place undergoes a complete transformation. Our little town is filled to repletion; the prices of lodgings rise 500 per cent.; the Bullseye (like another *œil-de-bœuf*) becomes crowded with rank and fashion. Four-in-hands throng the streets, and in the morning and in the evening ladies of the highest *ton*—and heels—sweep with their trains our esplanade, accompanied by indolent and button-holed cavaliers. In the morning and the evening, but not in the day-time; the whole day, for nearly the

whole week, they attend the fashionable races in the vicinity, to which we owe the honour of their visit. They use us merely as a stepping-stone to them from London. We have the sort of temporary attraction for them that is found in acquaintances who live at Putney as the time for the University race draws near, or whose windows command Lord's cricket-ground when the Eton and Harrow match approaches: when the event is over, they think no more of us till next year.

And when these high and mighty personages are here, what, it may be asked, becomes of the ordinary visitors to Sandiford? Blinded by the unaccustomed glitter of this gallant company and dazed by its airy mirth, do they hide in holes in the sand or caves in the rocks till the week is over? No; they disappear more completely. It is disagreeable to quiet people to be told by their landladies in the middle of the summer, "You must either pay us five times your rent for the coming race-week or you must go;" so they generally do go and don't come back again. Lodgers may come after the race-week, but not the same lodgers; they have left Sandiford in a huff for good and all. Upon the whole, therefore, I doubt whether the brief influx of the world of fashion with its one week's harvest of fancy prices does Sandiford much good.

But to the outsider who stays to see it the trans-

formation is most remarkable. It is probably the only glimpse of the so-called "great world" that the Sandifordians ever get. They see it superficially, of course, but with its most characteristic traits unusually developed. High-born gamblers and professional beauties; adventurers and hangers-on of both sexes; the haughty and the reckless—in short, a high-class carnival. It is possible, too, that this impression may be reciprocated. One can imagine, at least, some Lady Clara Vere de Vere, too young to have become acclimatized to the cold shadow of her caste, taking in half unconsciously during some pause in the week's revelry the quiet peace of our little town into her very soul. It may pass from her mind as quickly as the dew is brushed from a flower; she may even express, with the thoughtless and selfish crew around her, her wonder that people can live in such a place and not hang themselves for very weariness. But long afterwards, on the eve it may be of her taking some step wherein she risks more than she risked at the races, the remembrance of the moonlit and low-breathing sea at peaceful Sandiford may come to her not in vain.

TIPS.

THE Moralist is not such a power among us as he used to be. Whether the days of dogma are numbered, as some say, or not, it is certain that it is so with the days of didactic teaching. Where are the copy-books, with that beautiful swan made with a quill taken from her own feathers, for their frontispiece, and those admirable aphorisms, with their up-strokes so fine and their down-strokes so thick, for their head-lines? Where are the "moral tales" which were bought by our parents and guardians for us in our youth? For even in their heyday I do not suppose anyone ever bought a moral tale to please himself; they had what is called—a little severely, for I think such matters might have the benefit of a periphrasis—a forced circulation. I remember it being hazarded by a juvenile cynic, made desperate by a surplus of this sort of literature, that an "immoral tale" as a sub-title on a fly-leaf might prove attractive and remunerative to the publisher. Whither, too, oh, whither has Allegory fled, with all her attractions? She never got over

that wicked remark by the satirist that her primary intention was to make the head ache, and has sulked in silence ever since. The very man who made it, used to write "stories with a purpose," a species of literature no longer in fashion.

It is difficult to say when the influence of the Moralist began to wane; but I am inclined to think it was when things began to be "done upon principle." His declared object was to elevate, and perhaps when he had raised us to that pitch his mission was accomplished. With all his weaknesses, one had a sneaking liking for the old fellow. He was dull—very dull—and indigestible; but there was a simplicity and kindness about him that one missed in his successor, "High Principle," who had always the best of reasons for being harsh and unjust and never giving anything away. For my part, I never hear anyone talk of doing anything "on principle" without making a picture in my mind of a gentleman buttoning up his pockets. The Moralist was austere, but he was not mean nor hypocritical. He was very severe upon human frailty, and had no more sense of comparison as regards degrees of criminality than a schoolmaster who reprimands his boys for bullying, and expels them for going out of bounds or smoking cigars; but he allowed some liberty to impulse. If you found a woman with a child in her arms, for example, half

smothered in a snowdrift, it would have been permissible, under the system which once ruled us, to give her brandy, shelter, and food, without making inquiries about her domicile, or going into her undomestic history; whereas, under the higher law which now regulates our actions, application would first have been made to the Mendicity Society—a course of proceeding which, among other advantages, would set the doubtful question of the advisability of her restoration to life at rest for ever. The Moralist was cold, but not so frozen as to be insensible to feeling. His ideas of charity, though leavened by patronage, were at least genuine; and, so far from placing a low motive on a lofty ground, he was on the whole better than he seemed. Like Quince, he argued that—

“The poor
Were ever able, never willing,
And so the beggar at his door
Got first abuse and then a shilling.”

At Christmas he was liberal—nay, even lavish—nor did he object to the system of “tips” at any time.

It is for this reason that the Moralist has put in an appearance in this humble essay, for, unless in his respectable company, I should never have ventured to intrude my old-world and obsolete views. Without the consciousness of his venerable approval, I should

not have dared, I say, to advocate a habit which it is now agreed by all the modern authorities "tends to undermine independence, to destroy all sense of duty to the community," and to do a number of other things which two generations ago it would have frightened one even to think of. In my youth "tips" were very welcome to me, and one of the few reasons which make me regret the days of boyhood is that no one in shaking hands now leaves half-a-sovereign in my willing palm, or slaps me on the back with the commonplace but admirable observation, "Here's something for the tuck-shop, my boy."

No doubt the practice produced that evil so hateful to the political economist, "an uncertainty of income," but that is a misfortune which happens to many people nowadays who are never tipped at all; while as for "pauperizing" me, I protest, if there is any meaning in words, the effect (as the pastrycook could testify) was quite the reverse.

Of tips to boys, more than any other kind of gifts, it may be said, not indeed that it is more blessed, but more pleasant, to give than to receive; and I confess that I never see a schoolboy, especially at Christmas time, without my fingers mechanically taking the direction of my waistcoat-pocket. It is quite a selfish satisfaction to remember that you were his father's

friend, or his mother's sweetheart, or his own second cousin once removed, which gives one the shadow of an excuse for obeying so natural an impulse. At the sight of the proffered coin, a look of more or less ecstatic delight (according to the size or weight of it) comes into his honest eyes; what he is thinking of is, not how kind you are—you may as well look for gratitude in an Irish Nationalist as in a schoolboy—but what he will buy with it; something that he has been coveting for ever so long, and which, whether it be a ship or a whip, will have all the charm of unexpectedness.

Anyone who knows human nature knows that this is the greatest charm of all. It has been painfully insisted on by our modern teachers that a pleasure acquired by prudence and perseverance—a piano upon the three years' hire system, for example—excels all others; whereas the very contrary is the case. The young couple get tired to death of the piano which they have been paying for by instalments, and on the day it is their own would gladly give one instalment more (which is about its value by that time) to get the thing carted away. Now just try tipping some newly-married pair who have ventured to wed upon a small income, with a *new* piano, and compare their sentiments with the above. The very name this sort of unexpected surprise used to bear in the old

times—a Godsend—shows what our fathers thought of it.

To be “quite a man and no young person now,” as the old song went, was a fine thing; but it was purchased at the sacrifice of those schoolboy perquisites, at a time, too, when they would have been more acceptable than ever; in some respects, indeed, the transformation not a little resembled what is known at the Bar as “taking silk,” a metamorphosis with more dignity about it than advantage. In my own case, there was a dear old aunt who still exercised what she called the “privilege of age” in continuing these benevolences, and I wish to Heaven that her days had been prolonged even to this hour. To be tipped at sixty would be an agreeable novelty.

There is a curious confusion in the mind of the public between tips and bribes, though the two things are entirely different. A tip, when not the mere exercise of a spirit of benevolence, is the reward for some personal service; and it is amazing indeed that in a commercial country, in which the system of commission giving is almost universal, so comparatively innocent a practice should be so vehemently denounced. The payment of a commission is generally illegitimate, and very often improper; but it has a business air about it to which the tip cannot pretend, and which carries it off. It is on precisely the same grounds

that playing cards for a few shillings is proscribed as gambling, while a speculation on the Stock Exchange involving thousands is euphoniously termed "an operation."

A quarter of a century ago or so the payment of hotel servants was a great social difficulty. Some people paid them too little and others too much. It was an intolerable nuisance to both classes that on their departure from an hotel they should have to march out between two lines of domestics with bent backs and extended palms. Mr. Albert Smith found a panacea for this evil, though at great loss to the community, when he persuaded innkeepers to put "attendance" in the bill. They have put it in the bill with a vengeance, the charge at some fashionable caravanserais being as much as 2s. a head per diem; but, on the other hand, the gifts to hotel domestics have now become exactly what tips should be, the reward of exceptional civility. Of course, it is often argued, "Since attendance is charged in the bill, why should I pay anything?" But waiters and chambermaids are not thought-readers; nobody gives or does not give till he goes away, and the consequence is we are all round better waited upon than we used to be. It may be urged that the desire of gain is not a very high motive, but it is a very universal one; and, moreover, the practice of doing one's best, no matter

from what motive, very much improves one's general behaviour. I have been a frequent visitor at hotels all my life, and can testify that attendance has much altered for the better in these later years. The mouldy and morose waiter who was always certain of his "vail" has vanished, and if his successor is not exactly a Mercury with wings to his heels, he at least knows that "it answers" to answer the bell.

There is, indeed, a species of tips which are exceedingly improper—namely, gifts to club waiters—and for the reason that any acknowledgment of personal service is, in their case, out of place and productive of wrong to others. I once heard, indeed, a young gentleman of small means, but lavish habits, defend the system amid some signs of public approval; it was in a proprietary club infested by a certain monarch of finance who had taken care of the pence all his life, and had been equally solicitous not to let the pounds take care of themselves, but was somehow nevertheless unpopular. "I do confess," said this young scapegrace, "that I think a sovereign or two well spent which make the waiters fly to me and neglect old Bullion;" but, though there were marks of adhesion at the time in the smoking-room, it was felt that, however commendable the practice might be in that particular case, it was, on the whole, to be discouraged. In all respectable clubs there are ways of

acknowledging good service by subscribing to the servants' cricket or other funds, or by helping them to obtain change of air when necessary, without giving fees to individuals.

The tipping, however, which is most familiar to us all is those gratuities which are forbidden to be accepted by railway officials on pain of immediate dismissal. The effect of this benevolence, we are told, is to make them "uncivil except to the rich." Now it so happens that there is no class of person in this country, and certainly in no other, whose civility is so universally admitted as that of the railway guard. Our home travellers have but one opinion upon this subject, and when they go abroad this opinion is amply confirmed by contrast. "There is none like him, none," we all acknowledge, for gentleness and courtesy to all classes; but it is only when any of us have to make inquiries in a Government department that we learn how very *unlike* him an official can be.

I do not say that tips have made the railway guard what he is, but he is certainly well acquainted with the practice, and it has not harmed him. He is as polite to the poor governess (as she will tell you) as he is to the millionaire; nor, indeed, is there any reason why he should bow down before that personage, for it is by no means the richest man who is most *free* with his money. If the railway guard is actuated

by mercenary motives, they are not manifest; in short, he is well content with the average of results, and, like the tailor who makes his good customers pay for the bad ones, gives credit—even where he suspects there is no solvency, or, at least, no surplus—for good intentions.

A NEW CALLING.

OUR "great modern satirist," as a certain very accurate student of human nature is sometimes called by persons who cannot quite make up their minds whether he intended to be serious or otherwise, was once so good as to suggest to the upper ten thousand, who swore by him, the hint of a new profession. The idea was ingenious enough, but, after all, there was not so much of novelty in it, since he only proposed that a calling which was already well known enough should be followed by members of the aristocracy out at elbows, instead of the more humble but less necessitous class which had hitherto kept it to themselves. The occupation in question was that of an auctioneer, which he pointed out with infinite humour could be pursued under much more favourable conditions by persons of good blood but in want of money.

Nothing came of this suggestion at the time, though, as I notice there is now at least one titled person in the city who occupies the rostrum, it may be concluded that the seed did not fall upon altogether barren ground. In those days, however, nearly

two generations ago, the world—that is, the world of fashion—was not put to such sad shifts as it is now. Rents were paid with a reduction of ten per cent. for the half-year, “being” (so I note still runs the notification) “at the rate of twenty per cent. per annum,” and even some Irish ones were discharged otherwise than by means of a blunderbuss. It had not yet become the correct thing, and a sign of long association with “the land,” to be impecunious, and to be obliged to put down one’s carriage was anything but a mark of good-breeding. All those things have changed, or rather gone on from bad to worse. It is not the younger sons of the aristocracy who are now so much in need of maintenance as the elder sons who have “succeeded to the title” and its embarrassments. Their estates just suffice to pay off the allowances with which they are burthened, but leave no surplus for the head of the house, as he is still cynically called, though we may be sure he has let the family mansion if he can and lives in lodgings. “I have a castle, a yacht, and a house in Mayfair,” used to be the humorous observation of one of our territorial grandees, “but I give you my honour I don’t know where to turn for a ten-pound note.” This statement can now be made by a good many of them in only too sober seriousness. What they will have to do, perhaps, eventually is not what the satirist recommended to their younger brethren—to become auc-

tioneers; but to put themselves up to auction in the matrimonial market. A thing is worth what it will fetch, says the commercial dictum, and we shall then see what Titles will fetch. I hope and believe that they will "fetch" a sufficient number of the fair sex with ample fortunes to tide over the present distress. But, after all, this will be but a temporary measure. The time is coming, surely if slowly, when hereditary titles will be no longer enjoyed; and what is to be done *then* for birth and blood?

- One's sympathies should, of course, not be confined to these poor but honourable persons; the middle classes are feeling the pinch of poverty as they have never felt it before, and are as much in want of a "new calling." All the gates are thronged with suitors, and open but to golden keys; that is to say, if you want to get a living for your son you have to buy one—as though it were a Church living. Eminent firms are ready enough to take him into their service for a premium of, say, £250; after four years, if he gives satisfaction, he may then become a salaried clerk, with an income that may keep him in boots, because he has but little time for walking. That branch business of the eminent firm, by-the-bye, strikes me as an admirable one, though unhappily it is not a new calling—to collect premiums from the widow and orphan for the employment of youths for four years, and then to *dismiss them*, unsalaried, as not having given complete

satisfaction. I knew a lad in a great engineer's office who passed quite a large portion of his life (for he died early) in "holding a candle inside a boiler while another man hammered nails in it," and only paid three hundred guineas for the privilege. But what remunerative occupation is to be found for the sons of the middle classes is much too large a question for my humble pen. I am satisfied, and immensely pleased with myself, for having discovered one—as I firmly believe I have—for the scions of the "upper ten."

It may be asked—and from what one knows of "poor human nature" (which is always, it may be noted, something quite unconnected with one's self and the reader) it *will* be asked—Why should I tell this secret for nothing, when it could be sold for much to a necessitous peerage? Well, I have considered the matter in all its bearings, and prefer to trust to the generosity of the public: I see so many subscriptions raised upon such very small provocation for such infinitesimal objects, that I cannot believe that so great a benefit to "that aristocracy which has done so much for us" will pass unrequited. Moreover (to be quite honest), the idea in question is not perhaps so entirely my own that I could sell it without some imputation of getting money under false pretences—a charge from which a scrupulous nature well may shrink. It was, in fact, suggested to me by a well-known poet; and though he has doubtless forgotten the circumstance, I

am pretty sure, if he found there was money in it, that he would remember it quickly enough. I have some experience of poets, and my observation has led me to the conclusion that, though they sing as sweetly and naturally as the birds, they do not sing for nothing—if they can help it. It is horrible to think of a human nightingale, after some delicious quaver, or a featherless blackbird, after a “fine careless rapture” (which, however, we need not imagine “he never can recapture”), sending round his hat for payment—but he does it. They are very sharp about their profits, these poets. Well, this one was walking with me in a wood the other day, when the following circumstance—every bit of which he has since set forth in rhyme, but without the pregnant suggestion to which I am coming all in good time—took place. Doubtless many of my readers have read it, and as to others I will spare them; let it suffice that in the middle of that bosky wood he found a flat stone lying on moss, out of which, when he had lifted it with his stick, he made an apologue, quite long enough for me at the time, but which he has since expanded to fifteen or twenty pounds—I mean to at least five hundred lines of verse. It was the day after the public conclusion of a great social scandal, and he drew a parallel between it and that lifted stone with all the filthy creeping things it had disclosed. “But for my stick,” he *said*, “*nothing* would have impaired this scene of

idyllic peace and beauty; you would never have guessed of the existence of what lay below that restful smoothness. Such is our 'good society' till the stick of the law comes to raise the lid of it." Then, after a few more poetical reflections, "It would be well worth a man's while who should hit on a plan to avert these unfortunate little disclosures, eh?" I shook my head, but at that very instant a great thought, begotten of his careless hint, flashed on my brain and flushed along my cheek: The Arbitrator!

Here is a new calling, with a vengeance I was about to say, but it is quite the other way; a calling the very *raison d'être* of which should be the doing away of all revenges and complications and disclosures, and the making things quiet and comfortable all round. The occupation is not, it may be objected, a new one, or even unknown as regards this especial use; but the *desideratum* I have in my mind is an altogether different thing from any system of arbitration at present in existence. There are "arbitration cases" of course, which are "settled out of court," though not without the introduction of personages in wigs and gowns, and comments by the gentlemen of the Press; but I refer to matters of a much more delicate and important kind, which the law has too rude a touch to be permitted to handle, and wherein publicity is as bad as an unfavourable verdict, and often to both parties.

What is wanted is a private and confidential ad-

viser of tact and honour; a Social Arbitrator, well acquainted with all the weaknesses of fashionable life, and himself placed by birth and blood in so high a position that his authority would be beyond dispute. What magnificent opportunities would be offered in this line of business to, say, a pauper peer! With such an intermediary, persons of the same rank in social trouble would at least feel at home; it is probable, too, that he might have the advantage of an experience of some similar little difficulty in his own case; and at all events they would have confidence in his honour. The pecuniary results arising from this particular source might not indeed be of much importance, the uppermost of the "upper circles" having just now little money to spare; but as "references" they would be invaluable. His lordship the Arbitrator could put upon his professional card that he was permitted to say that he had arranged matters of a delicate nature for the highest families, who might even be indicated in a general way, as the innkeeper in the Lake country used to advertise his establishment as being "patronized by the Royalties and the Rothschilds." Such a card as this would indeed be a trump card with the middle and moneyed classes. To have the opportunity of employing such an individual in their own affairs would give them the same enjoyment that Mr. Bounderby found in the services of Mrs. Sparsit. To *know that the same courtly hand was smoothing away*

their difficulties that had "acted for" the Duke of Alicompaine and the Marquis of Fitzmarmalade would fill them with complacency and render compensation a very secondary matter. As to disputing his lordship's bill, I am sure that would never be thought of; though of course the very nature of the case would preclude the mention of items. "To Viscount Ballyraggum"—for even the Irish peerage (which at the present crisis makes this discovery of mine especially valuable) would serve in default of something better—"To Viscount Ballyraggum, for his valuable services in arranging an affair of delicacy and honour, £1,000."

As the matter, but for him, would have thrown as much dirt in the faces of all concerned as the Rotomahana volcano did over "the Pink and White Terraces," besides, perhaps, involving the subsidiary questions of perjury and subornation, his charge could be hardly less than in four figures. The heads of this new profession, when once it got into working order, would, it is certain, make incomes that would rival those of the most successful lawyers and Government contractors; nor is it improbable that after a few years of practice our earl or viscount might retire into private life after having repurchased all his family estates. To have recovered by arbitration, what his ancestors had lost by probably much less respectable means, would be a reflection indeed to comfort his declining

years, not to mention the capital stories, collected in his brief but prosperous career, he would have to tell his friends after dinner.

The whole picture, indeed, from this elevated point of view, appears attractive in the highest degree; but I would by no means limit the benefits of this great discovery to persons of title, or even to those belonging to the junior branches of the aristocracy, though for obvious reasons it is these classes who will reap the largest harvest. "Tis always morning somewhere in the world," and not a morning without a row in it for some family or another, though it may not necessarily belong to the circles of fashion. They may not be rich enough to employ an arbitrator of high rank, but they will want *somebody* to settle their vulgar differences; there will be, therefore, no limit to the extent of our new profession, but on the other hand, it is one that will require exceptional talents to ensure success. Anyone who has passed the necessary examinations may be one's lawyer, and even one's family lawyer; but no amount of book-learning or quill-driving will fit a man to put S.A. (for Social Arbitrator) upon his doorplate unless he has a natural gift for it.

The duties of this new calling, no matter by whom exercised, will require tact, skill, and delicacy—attributes which are rarely possessed, save by persons of *education*, who are also well acquainted with the

world. It will not, therefore, in any case, be a vulgar vocation. If it has the success which I prophesy for it, it will undoubtedly confer a certain social distinction; it does not even seem impossible that the first person who makes his mark in it may (if otherwise not ennobled) assume the title of his profession, and be introduced with his wife by the ushers of the world of fashion—in point of fact the butlers—like the Archbishop of Canterbury, the O'Donoghue, the Chisholm, and other exceptional celebrities, as “the Arbitrator and Mrs. Jones,” an announcement calculated to make some sensation.

And this brings me to another and most important feature of this valuable suggestion. Why should not Mrs. Jones herself be an Arbitrator or Arbitratix? There are some cases, of course, in which she could hardly interfere; I believe that even female physicians draw the line somewhere in their ministrations; but, on the other hand, difficulties will arise “in the best-regulated families,” which, as ten to one they have been caused by the gentler sex, require, upon the homœopathic principle of like to like, the gentle touch of a lady's hand to allay them. Of the passion for litigation that slumbers, or rather, unhappily, does not slumber, in the female breast, we have had of late too many instances; and here at last is a legitimate channel for its exercise. It will not, indeed, be contention, but it will be a mitigated form of it, which

(let us hope) will have the same effect as vaccination on the patient. This, however, is only one of many indirect benefits that are likely to arise from my discovery. The main point is that I have now brought before the notice of the public a "New Calling," especially adapted to "the classes" (who are just now having so bad a time of it), and which can be followed with honour and profit by both gentlemen and ladies.

THE FIRST WARNING.

IN the poem of "The Three Warnings," ascribed to Mrs. Thrale, but concerning which it is ungallantly suggested, since it is "so superior to her other compositions," that Johnson must have helped her in it, there seems to me an error or two, even if he did. The hero Dodson—was ever such a name given to hero before?—is first presented to us as a "jocund bridegroom," who, when Death looks in upon him, very naturally observes:

"Young as I am, 'tis monstrous hard,
My thoughts on other matters go;
This is my wedding-day, you know."

Moved by this argument, Death promises not to call again for some time to come, and in the meantime to send "Three Warnings beforehand." He calls in Dodson's eightieth year—a proof of moderation on the part of his grisly majesty which is not appreciated.

"So soon returned!" old Dodson cries.
'So soon, d'ye call it?' Death replies;
'Surely, my friend, you're but in jest;
Since I was here before
'Tis six-and-thirty years at least,
And you are now fourscore."

So that the poetess makes the "jocund bridegroom" no less than forty-four on his marriage-day—presumably his first one. This is surely not poetical justice—to the bride. Moreover, Mrs. Thrale makes another and a graver error in the character of her first warning; which she makes to be lameness. This is not in accordance with the experience of human life at all. It should have been failure of memory; and if Dodson had been half as sharp as Dodson and Fogg were, he might have pleaded it with success. When Death reminded him on his previous visit, he should have boldly said that he had no recollection of the circumstance, and insisted on a written notice and starting *de novo*. I have no doubt whatever, that, except in cases of chronic rheumatism or of habitual intoxication, one's memory goes before one's legs. And even while we possess it, how partial it is! The scientific writers upon this subject take little note of this, and seem to attribute its absence in certain particulars to disease; but, if so, there must be a good many diseased memories. For my own part, I have never been able to remember a single date, save that of the Battle of Hastings, for which a verse in Valpy's "Chronology,"

"In years one thousand and sixty-six
Since Christ in Bethlehem's manger lay,"

gave me a particular clue; and the year 1830, which *has a special significance* for me, as being the epoch

in which (as I have been informed) I myself began to "flourish."

Cross-examination in a court of justice has always its terrors; for what chance has even the most blameless life against the insinuations of a brutal and chartered slanderer? but for me it would be destruction, since, though I remember the occurrence of things, I have not the slightest idea as to when they occurred; not only within a week, or a month, or a year, but within a decade. Such a question as, "Now, on your oath, sir, was it not in May, 1870, that you made the first attempt to poison your grandmother?" would paralyze me at once. I should not only not know whether it was in May or March, but should be unable to indicate the date within ten years. The circumstance itself would no doubt recur to me on having my mental elbow thus brutally jogged, but as to when it took place, I should be powerless to help even my own counsel. If the judge insisted, he would have to take his choice between 1066 and 1830, and fix the month as he liked. There must be an immense number of people in the same unhappy position as myself in this respect, and I can't imagine what they do under such circumstances.

In a recent trial, some poor wretch subjected to this torture, which is very similar to the old "pressing to death," produced in despair a diary. It was of course at once suggested that it was forged. Perhaps it was;

but who can blame him? I can *imagine* dates myself, though I can never remember them. On the other hand, there are heaps of people who seem to remember nothing *but* dates. They forget the point of their stories altogether, but have all the chronological details at their fingers' ends, or thereabouts. "It was in the autumn of 1846," they begin, "and rather late in the autumn: yes, it was in October, and severe weather for the time of year. 1847, as you no doubt remember (they turn to me for corroboration; I gasp and nod), was particularly mild in its autumn," etc. etc.

Good heavens! In what pigeon-holes in their minds do they keep such a fact as that, and why do they keep it? It is this sort of memory which, like a bad shilling, never leaves its possessor. Age cannot impair it, nor custom stale its infinite inutility. On the other hand, their memory upon other matters leaves them, as it leaves me, long before their legs. I have a relative who has so many nephews and nieces that she can't count them, and makes no effort to do so, but with whom the recollection of 1846 as distinguished from 1847 with its mild autumn is quite distinct. If an expectant juvenile comes to see her, he is welcomed cordially: "My darling child, how well you are looking, and how good it is of you to come and see your old auntie!" Then after the cake and wine have been partaken of, and the two half-crowns in a piece of *silver paper* duly pocketed, she inquires with tender

curiosity, "And now, my dear, *who* are you?" I have not got to that stage yet myself, but that is what I am coming to.

People don't lose their memory all of a sudden, of course. The commencement of its failure is with the small cards of the plain suits: nobody (but your partner) thinks much of that; but when it comes to the large cards and the trumps, you had better sit out and content yourself with watching the play. Your own part in the game of whist (and of life) is over. Royal families (because perhaps in their case not to know folks is a slight, and therefore the art is worth cultivating) are said to have "an extraordinary memory for faces." I yield to no crowned head in Europe in this particular; I recognise with ease, but I cannot identify. A man's face, once seen, becomes familiar to me, but not necessarily welcome; I don't know whose it is. It may be my Lord Thingamy whom I was so gratified by meeting at What-d'ye-call-um's the other night, and who conversed so affably upon the weather; or it may be the young man who irons my hats at Lincoln and Bennett's; or it may be one of the club waiters out for a holiday. Or, again, I may connect a man's face with his individuality; know him for my friend or neighbour perfectly well; but his name escapes me. When one's friend asks to be introduced to another hitherto a stranger to him, and you can't do it for the life of you, on account of this

temporary oblivion, it is very inconvenient. There have been occasions when I have forgotten them both; it is then necessary to put on an appearance of excessive *bonhomie*, clap them each on the back, and exclaim, "You two know one another by name, of course;" and if they don't it's unfortunate, but not *my* fault. I can remember good stories; but unless the persons of whom they are narrated are necessary to the jest, they are very apt to escape me.

There was one, with more humour than grace in it, told of a certain money-lender of the last generation. Finding myself after dinner next to a man very obnoxious to me, but whom, for my host's sake, I wished to treat civilly, I favoured him with this very anecdote; it was better, under these circumstances, than conversation, and, dull as he was, I felt it could not fail to tickle him. The effect was unmistakable, but it did not take the shape I expected. He grew graver and graver; his face became a bluish-purple, and his eyes slowly pushed themselves out of his head. Then suddenly it flashed across me that the hero of this very funny, but not complimentary, narrative was his own father. "Well," he said in an awful voice, as I stopped short; "what then?"

My brow was bedewed with horror, and I seemed to see sparks. "My very dear sir," I said, "I am ashamed to say that I have drunk a little too much *wine*. I have clean forgotten how the story ended!"

But I have not forgotten how near I was to telling it, nor shall I ever forget it.

That was an example of memory coming to the rescue indeed; but sometimes it arrives inopportunistically. An old acquaintance of mine who lived in the days when George III. was king, and had not a little to do with him, told me the following story. In those good old days a title of nobility was really worth something, and fetched a good round sum. My friend was the youthful assistant of a well-known gentleman, Major D., who dealt in such things; and an excellent living he made by them. He was "attached to the person of his Majesty" (not without reason), and took advantage of his position to recommend his friends (and clients) to "the fountain of honour," who was far from being in good condition. He had still his wits about him, but not, like his lords, "in waiting." Sometimes he would sign anything in the most obliging manner, and sometimes refuse to stir a finger, and make the most embarrassing inquiries. The Major's business, therefore, though very lucrative when all things went right, was a speculative one, and exposed to considerable risks. One day there was a baronetcy "on," for which a celebrated maker of musical instruments had undertaken to pay handsomely, and the necessary parchment, duly drawn out, was laid before the King. His royal eye, wandering aimlessly down the page, suddenly lit upon the name of the candidate for great-

ness—some Erard or Broadwood of that time—and it evoked a flash of memory. “You’re sure there’s no piano in it?” he exclaimed suddenly. His Majesty, who was a great stickler for birth, and had a corresponding contempt for those who made their money by trade, was not to be trifled with in such a matter; and as there were a great many pianos in it, the two confederates had to hurriedly murmur, “We will make inquiries, sire,” and roll up the patent. That little gleam of royal recollection cost the Major £5,000, his assistant, my informant, his fee, and the musical gentleman his baronetcy.

Judging from my own case, since some unlooked-for return of this departing attribute always delights my soul, the King himself must have been pleased. I can imagine him saying, “By jingo! I remembered *that*, though;” and reflecting that he was not so very old after all. Unhappily there is little comfort to be drawn from such occasional resuscitations. It is only that “the shadow feared of man” has had his attention withdrawn from us for the moment (probably to some more advanced case), and forgets to beckon with that inexorable finger. It is no use to fight against the ebbing wave; yet how some people do fight!

I was once dining with a friend who had one other guest, whom I will call C. This gentleman, after dinner, *became* extraordinarily eloquent upon the agreeable

qualities of a certain Mr. D., who, according to his account, had been imported from Cornwall to London solely for his conversational qualities. "His stories," he said, "are simply inimitable."

"I suppose they are Cornish stories," observed our host, who, as a denizen of Pall Mall, did not much believe, perhaps, in provincial celebrities.

"Not at all," replied C. indignantly; "they are English stories." This statement, which suggested that we had thought the stories were in old Cornish—an extinct dialect—tickled me immensely; but, being a very well-behaved individual, I devoted myself to the biscuits and kept my eyes on the table.

"And have you heard any of these admirable narratives?" inquired our host.

"Yes; lots." It struck me that the word "lots" sounded suspiciously like "lotsh:" but yet it was impossible to imagine C. intoxicated: he not only looked as sober as a judge, but he *was* a judge (though, it is true, only a colonial one), and, though of heavy build and dignified movement, he seemed the last sort of person to be overtaken by liquor.

I think our host noticed that something was amiss, for he said, "Won't you take any more wine?" and half rose from his chair as if to adjourn to the smoking-room. "Let us drink this first," said C. with judicial gravity, "before we think of any more. That was a speech," he added with a confidential smile, "that was

made by the old dean of something or another to his host when he wanted to get him away to the ladies." *Our* host hastened to explain that he had no such end in view; nor indeed was it possible, since we were dining at a club, which does not admit the other sex; and, since he found himself in for it, returned, rather wickedly, as I thought, to the Cornishman and his stories.

"Perhaps, my dear C., you will be so good as to tell us one."

"By all means; I will. It is not the best of them perhaps; but it will give you an idea of his style." Then he began. I say he began; but in point of fact he never left off beginning. There was an inn-keeper, and a smuggler, and a miner, and the first hint of a wreck, but they were mere skeletons. The Cornish gentleman's style, if it *was* his style, was certainly tedious. It was like drawing an immense map of an unknown country for our instruction, without so much as a post town in it. I did not dare look up from my plate. I felt myself on the verge of an apoplectic fit through suppressed laughter, and I knew that my host was suffering the same inconvenience; he was much fatter, and of necessity touched the table, which gently shook in sympathy with his inward agonies. Suddenly the judge ceased in the middle of a sentence, and then, as ill luck would have it, my host's foot (he was *stretching his legs* for a momentary relief to the mental

tension) touched my own. Then we both burst out into inextinguishable mirth. For my part I could not have avoided it had C. been the Pope. What added to my hilarity was the desperate efforts of our host to apologize, which, themselves interrupted by spasms of laughter on his own part, were received by C. with imperturbable gravity. He did not give one the impression of being annoyed at all, but merely as biding his time for some full and complete explanation. At last his opportunity arrived. "I am aware," he said, "my good friends, that I have somehow forgotten the point of what I give you my honour is a most interesting story, but *give me one more chance.*"

Anything more pathetic I never heard. It reduced our mirth to sober limits at once, and then he began again. As I live by bread (and little else) the inn-keeper, the smuggler, the miner, and the first hint of the wreck that never was to come off, were all planned out again, and he came to a full stop precisely and exactly at the same moment as before. I don't know what powers of narration the Cornish gentleman really did possess, but I am quite certain that no "twice-told tale" of his or any other person ever evoked such rapturous delight in his hearers as that story twice begun and never finished. The judge is knighted and sitting thousands of miles away presiding over his dusky court; but I seem to see him now, imperturbable, bland, and modestly pleading, "Give me one

more chance." He had confidence in his memory, though it was misplaced.

In the scientific treatises on the failure of memory, some very curious specific examples are given. Thus one gentleman could never retain any conception of words beginning with the letter D (such as his debts, for instance), while with another the figure 5 had utterly lost its significance.* This latter catastrophe would be serious to a whist-player, since he would never know when he had won a game; but otherwise the blank seems endurable. What would be much more curious would be the losing sight of number one, which, however, up to our last moments (and indeed in those especially) is never forgotten.

Of course there are exceptions as regards this first hint of mental decay. It is even stoutly asserted by some persons that the loss of memory arises merely from disuse. It is only, they argue, in youth, in most cases, that we attempt to learn things "by heart" at all, while, when we grow old, we delegate the duty of remembrance to others. If we kept it up, the faculty would not desert us. A corroboration of this pleasant theory is found in Mr. Samuel Brandram, who, though not apparently in his *première jeunesse*, exhibits a stupendousness of recollection infinitely more marvellous, because accompanied by acute perception,

* Hence, perhaps, the origin of the term "spoilt fives," the meaning of which I could never understand.

than that of the most Calculating Boy. One of my favourite nightmares—I have a whole stud of them—is to dream that I am standing before a distinguished audience, including her Majesty and the Royal Family, who are awaiting a reading from Shakespeare without book; the indispensable glass of water is on the table with which I just moisten my lips, and then when I attempt to open them I find it has been a draught of Lethe. Every word of what I came to say has fled from my mind. I gasp and tremble; everybody becomes excited and impatient: in vain I attempt to conciliate them by offering to state accurately and offhand the date of the Battle of Hastings. There is a sort of O.P. riot, the distinguished audience rise *en masse*, tear up the benches, and make for me in the order of precedence; I wake in a paroxysm of terror, and—instantly forget all about it.

ON BEING "PILLED."

THERE may be some folks who don't know—I *do*—what it is to be "pilled." They may confound it with a calamity which, though not to be thought lightly of by anyone, is especially dreaded by juveniles. We talk of "sugaring the plum of education," but as a rule pills for children are not silvered. Who does not remember the shiver from head to heel that seized our little frame at the sight of those addled egglets lying in their cardboard nest, directed so neatly to Master Jones, "two to be taken at bedtime"? Some strong things have been said about gunpowder, but what is *that* compared with the loathsome powder in which *they* reposed, and at which our gorge rose while it was yet yards away. My contempt for medical science began at that epoch; for what could be the worth of it, if after four thousand years of "practice" the doctors gave you a thing like that? How I pitied the chemists' assistants that "made it up." I might have been a chemist myself, and have benefited the human race by the greatest discoveries, but for that *initial difficulty*.

The "pilling," however, that I have in my mind affects adults only: it is the delicate expression in club circles for black-balling. Half a century ago the operation was very uncommon and greatly resented. There is a story of a certain Irish gentleman, Mr. F., who, though destitute of those genial qualities for which his nation used to be so famous, and, to say truth, not at all a "clubbable man," had a great gift with the pistol. He proposed himself—that is, he frightened somebody into proposing him—for some aristocratic club, and was "pilled." As he felt certain no one would dare do this, he waited at the door on the day of the election, intending to walk in, after the few minutes consumed in this mere matter of form, as a duly elected member. A waiter presently came out to him, and in a trembling voice broke the terrible news that a black ball had been given which had excluded him. What happened to the unhappy menial is not recorded; he was probably butchered on the spot; but in those days no one cared about accidents to the lower classes.

The Irish gentleman waited on, and as each member of the club stepped out, he inquired of him, in those dulcet tones which used to precede the thunders of Mr. Chuck the boatswain, whether it was to his individual action that he was indebted for his exclusion.

It was taking a considerable liberty with the prin-

ciples of the ballot, but that did not enter Mr. F.'s mind, which was monopolized with the sole idea of entering the club. Everyone answered him with an assuring smile that he had not been responsible for the black ball.

"Then it was evidently dropped in by mistake," observed Mr. F.: "there must be a new election."

So there was; and that time he only got one *white* ball.

Nothing has ever happened to *me* so bad as that.

It is not surprising that the ballot came into vogue in clubs before it was accepted in politics. It would be intolerable to enter a social circle in which one's enemies were known to one, and not very agreeable to one's enemies. As a matter of fact, however, unless he is a public character and better known than liked, the black balls a man gets from private motives are very few. Those barbed arrows are really aimed through him at his proposer and seconder. It is my belief that if an unknown man, however offensive, should be proposed by two others equally unknown, but *in*offensive, he could get into any club in London. A man of mark, on the other hand, however meritorious, must needs have his enemies.

The possession of anything out of the way in the candidate himself, even of a queer name, is dangerous; his very profession, nay, his religious opinions, *may be a source of peril*. Some clubs will not have soli-

citors; some object to journalists; some to Jews; and I know one club (a charming one) that will not have lords at any price. Their society is held to foster snobbism, and to be therefore demoralizing.

I am afraid that in all large clubs there is a certain small percentage of persons, who, finding themselves in circumstances of social comfort to which they have been unaccustomed—astonished, like Mr. Squeers in his Sunday coat, at finding themselves so respectable—make a point of black-balling everyone. They think that by debarring others from the advantages of which they have unexpectedly come into possession, they surround themselves with an atmosphere of exclusiveness. Nothing else can account for the black balls found in the ballot-box in the case of so many blameless and unknown men. To a sensitive person, unconscious of wrong-doing, it is unpleasant to know that even one person would rather have his room than his company; but Human Nature must be taken as we find it, and we can only hug ourselves with the reflection (ready made for us by a great social philosopher) that we ourselves don't belong to it.

One of the most curious instances of club malice occurred at the Sword and Gun Club a few years ago. It is a society composed for the most part of very ancient warriors, who resent any accession to their numbers considerably more than any diminution of them by death, and who have a deep-seated anti-

pathy to promotion by merit. No one was eligible to the club under the rank of a brigadier, or a rear-admiral, so that under the late seniority system it was tolerably safe from the intrusion of youth. Still one cannot guard against everything. A young gentleman of eight-and-forty greatly distinguished himself in the field, got his brigade, and was entered in the candidates' book of the Sword and Gun. The circumstance caused great excitement. General Nestor and Admiral Oldbuck were especially furious. The proposition, they said, was little less than an insult. If boys should be admitted to the club, all would be over with it. They might stick up, "Lads prepared for the Army and Navy" over the portico and retire. It would be no longer a club but a seminary. As to the candidate in question, he might be an Infant Phenomenon as to talents and professional services—they had not a word to say against him on any ground save that of age: let him come up for election, say, thirty years hence, and they would willingly support him. But the present proceeding was positively indecent. There was a legend extant that some abnormally active, though sufficiently ancient member, had once run up the steps of the club (he had been in consequence refused admittance by the porter, and had had to appeal to the secretary for identification), but if this new comer was admitted, a precedent of *the most objectionable* kind would be established.

Marbles might come to be played upon the club-steps, and prisoners' base among its pillars. No; such sacrilege must be guarded against; and General Nestor and Admiral Oldbuck kept their eyes upon the candidates' book, ready to do their duty on the day of rejection.

As it happened, the ballot took place out of the season, and very few men belonging to the club were in town. General Nestor, however, was one of them; he had too long an experience of life to leave London. On one occasion I inquired of him, very respectfully (for his temper was what his flatterers called "uncertain"), whether he ever went into the country. "Once, sir," he replied, with the air of a man who has seen the error of his ways—"once I was fool enough to go to Brighton." But Admiral Oldbuck was in Cornwall. Just as an actor who gets a holiday always goes to the theatre, so that gallant mariner, though long superannuated and pensioned, and with no necessity for risking sea-sickness, found nothing so much to his mind as yachting. In the first week of August he received a telegram from the General (he never wrote to anybody because of his spelling, which had been found fault with by the hypercritical), "The Infant comes up here for election on the twenty-first, remember."

It was a most disagreeable reminder, for the Admiral hated London as much as the General liked

it; he also detested travelling, except by sea. He could have come by the yacht, of course, but there is an element of uncertainty about the arrival of sailing yachts to date, and date was everything in this case.

"Cannot the Infant be made safe without my coming?" he wired back.

"No," was the swift and stern reply; "there is a cabal against us" (which meant that the Infant had his private friends in the club). "Do your duty."

"I shall come on board on the twenty-first," returned the Admiral. And he came on board.

One in seven "excludes" at the Sword and Gun Club, which is a more open regulation than usual. The usual rule is one in ten (which nine people *out* of ten, by-the-bye, believe to be less exclusive), but at the Sword and Gun no checks were considered necessary; it was such a very close borough.

At the close of the ballot the Infant Phenomenon was found to have been elected.

The General and the Admiral repaired to the secretary's room at once.

"There has been foul play," they exclaimed, "in this election."

Their aspect was menacing and ferocious. The secretary, who took in the whole circumstances at a glance, sprang to the door, and kept his hand on it *while he made his explanation.*

"It all arose from the Admiral's coming up to vote," he faltered.

"Why, you villain, I black-balled him!"

"Very true, sir; but there were only fourteen without you. It takes fifteen to make a quorum, *and you made it*. If you had stopped away the election must have been postponed, and all would have been well. As it is, there were only two black balls to thirteen white ones, and the young gentleman is elected."

Another misadventure of quite a different kind occurred at a certain university club. No one is ever black-balled in it. If by any chance an objectionable person is proposed, his name is always withdrawn in time. It is very unusual for any candidate to get even one black ball. My dear friend Cruciform Pyx was a member of the club, but hardly ever entered it. He was too much engaged in his country parish, with his choir and other ecclesiastical institutions, to admit of his coming much to town. He had a waistcoat and cravat which astonished the unlearned; how he got into them and out of them, and how they were fastened, were, I regret to say, the subject of wagers among the more frivolous and youthful members of the society. Some thought he had been born in them; but I had known him at the university (where he had had a very pretty taste in colours), and knew this was not the case. He was one of the kindest-hearted men I ever met; a true lover of his fellow-creatures

(perhaps because he knew so little of them), but very shy and sensitive. Any novel experience perturbed him. A ballot happened to come on at the club during one of his rare visits to the metropolis, and he was asked to vote for a man. Of course he consented; he would have consented to anything that was not criminal, but it almost threw him into a fever. I think he imagined that he would have to appear on some sort of hustings, and record his suffrage amid a hail of brickbats and dead cats. When the day arrived it was noticed that his cravat was not nearly so stiff as usual. He came to my house after the ceremony and asked for a glass of water.

"Thank heaven," he said, "it's over: I hope I have done right."

"Right? why, of course you have," I replied. "What possible objection can there be to Jones? I should think he would not have a single right-hand ball from anybody."

"A what?" he gasped. "Why, I gave him a right-hand ball."

"But that is a black ball, my good fellow. Did you not see the 'No' written on the right-hand side of the box?"

Pyx shook his head, and murmured, "I saw nothing; I was too nervous. I naturally thought the *right hand* must mean all right, and I didn't dare

stay for the end of it. Oh dear! oh dear! what *shall* I do?"

"Well, you had better write to the secretary," I said, "and explain that if one black ball has done for Jones——"

"Done for Jones!" he echoed; "this is too horrible!"

Then somehow or other—I don't know how it was done, but it *was* done—he loosened both his cravat and waistcoat, and stood before me as limp as any layman.

"Give me some notepaper—send for a commissionaire!" he entreated passionately. "Oh, what a dreadful day!"

He wrote the letter, and I despatched the commissionnaire with it immediately. In half an hour—which seemed like half a century to poor Pyx—the messenger returned with the secretary's reply.

"Mr. Jones was elected," it said, "as were all the rest; but, as in his case, everyone had one black ball."

Pyx had "pilled" the whole lot of them.

Most people are very sensitive about being pilled (a circumstance which those who black-ball freely, and "with a light heart," forgetting that others have not the rhinoceros-hide which they themselves possess, should reflect upon); but the unpleasant sensation—like that of being horsewhipped for the first time,

which I am told is very disagreeable—soon wears off. Some folks even are rather proud of it: their modest natures seem to be satisfied in having been “in for a good thing,” though they did not get it, like half-bred colts entered for the Derby. They speak of these little social failures like men who have contested counties upon principle and have been unsuccessful. I know a man of this kind, who always reminded me of Byron’s friend, “one of the most agreeable fellows I ever met, but a pickpocket.” He did not, indeed, come under that precise category, but he had acquired property at one time which he had had to part with under pressure of the criminal law. In his own opinion he had a right to it; and when reminded that twelve of his fellow-countrymen (in a jury-box) had taken a different view, he would say with a gentle smile, “Providence and I together make a majority,” which showed that if he was not a thief he was at least a plagiarist. He used quietly to remark when clubs were the topic, “I was proposed for the So-and-So, in such and such a year,” just as a man might say, “I write for the *Times*,” not so much to convey the erroneous idea that his contributions are accepted, as to show himself capable of an honourable ambition.

Another example of patience and fortitude under this social tribulation was my friend R., a man of a *widely different* kind. He was an excellent fellow

and of a lively wit, but fell a victim to the too great eminence of his proposer and seconder. So essentially clubable a man was probably never "pilled" at a club. At a dinner-party at his own house, some guest, unconscious of this catastrophe, was discoursing, in a way that displayed his ignorance to perfection, upon the subject of black-balling. "For my part," he concluded, "I should never get over such a thing. What do you say, R.? If it happened to you, wouldn't you at once set sail for Australia?" "Yes," said R., with a smile that betrayed his consciousness of the neat rejoinder, "and by the Black Ball Line."

ON THE DOWNWARD SLOPE.

THERE have been some creditable attempts by ancient writers—who have also been pretty well advanced in years—to beatify old age; but not very much has come of it. Upon the whole, the world has remained so far unconvinced that no one gets old if he can help it; we take these raptures with a little salt, or at all events, if we credit them, are content to wait till in due time we inherit the mature privileges that have been promised to us. There is one thing, too, about which these optimists have been silent—namely, that to a considerable portion of the human race (say nineteen-twentieths) old age offers no immunity from toil, though it is quite unequal to bear it. Leisure and competence, with good health, are taken for granted. This, however, is the weak point of most philosophies, which persist in regarding the human race as persons of culture, reclining in easy-chairs, with things handsome about them, and in ignoring such trivial matters as disease and penury—an omission which proves that the sublimest intuition can *never supply* the want of experience, since the sharpest

pang of the soul produced by the contemplation of the Infinities is a mere flea-bite to the spectacle of one's children wanting bread, which, through old age or any other cause, we are unable to procure for them. In such cases, it is true, "there is always the workhouse;" but even that reflection, such is the unphilosophic character of the ordinary mind, often fails to be consolatory.

Still, to the public I am addressing at all events, there will be in old age, I hope, meat, drink, and clothing, and even (for a reason that it is not necessary to particularize) a spare sixpence, without their being troubled about such matters, so that, in considering this question of growing old, I may, like the philosophers above alluded to, take so much for granted.

It is not necessary for us to be poets to have an impression in youth that we shall never see old age. The reason of this pretty general feeling is, I think, that we are unable to picture such a state of things; it is necessary to grow old one's self in order to understand the transformation that circumstance effects in us. The failing limb and the scanty breath can, it is true, be understood—approximately, for they are not quite the same in illness—by those who have been invalids. As he reads the noble book of Ecclesiastes, even a young man can understand what sort of day that is with us in which the keepers of the house (the

arms) begin to tremble, and the strong men (the legs) to bow themselves, and those that look out of the window (the eyes) to be darkened; how we "rise up at the voice of the bird," not, alas! because we hear it more distinctly ("the daughters of music," so far as we are concerned, are indeed "brought low"), but because we can sleep no longer as in youth, or perhaps—more pitiful reason still!—because we wish to get the most out of the little daylight that remains to us, before we go to "the sunless land;" he may comprehend even how the almond tree flourishes (a strange trope indeed for the growth of "sad grey hairs"!) and the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails; but what the young man can *not* understand, and is wholly unable to picture, is the mental depression consequent on all these things, as the curtain gradually falls upon the stage of existence. It does not indeed "fall," except in rare instances, but gradually closes in and darkens, fold on fold, just as the coming on of night is represented in a theatre. Even youth sees bad weather occasionally, but the rain is soon "over and gone;" he knows not what it is to see "the clouds return *after* the rain;" he cannot conceive the years whereof we say, "We have no pleasure in them."

When a man grows old, most pleasures indeed, properly so called, are dead to him; and if, in spite of Nature's warning, he will still pursue them, his *experience is the reverse* of that of Don Juan, who, in-

stead of a spirit, found "her frolic grace Fitz Fulke;" he finds them the mere ghosts of his dead follies. There is nothing, for example, more pitiable than any pretensions to gallantry in an old man; let him adopt the *rôle* of "heavy father," "benevolent uncle," or whatever best suits his character, but at all events discard that of "lover" once for all. The only possible ground of his retaining it would be that his doing so affords amusement to his fellow-creatures—at the expense, however, of all who wear grey hairs.

There is another pleasure just as inappropriate, but to which old age is much more inclined—that of money-getting. It has been said of it, as of whist, that it is the only pleasure that lasts. It may be so—for unfortunately I have never been in a position to test it—but certainly, to the looker-on, nothing can be more contemptible than this piling-up heaps of money upon the verge of the grave. If, as the wit suggested, one could "begin the next world with it," then, indeed, such solicitude would be explicable enough. How little would people then "leave behind them!" How small would be the probate duties! How rare the bequests to missionary enterprise! But since it must all be left, and that so soon, how amazing is the satisfaction derived from its increase! There is an idea among the baser sort of wealthy persons that the more money they can hoard, the more "respected" they are; but as a matter of fact

they are the more detested for it. "How much have we lived worth?" not "How much shall we die worth?" is the question. The agreement of his fellow-creatures about Harpax is quite unanimous on that point. A few folks may be disappointed by the posthumous disposition of his property, but everybody is glad when he dies. Even the hope expressed of his going to heaven is a selfish one: "If Harpax gets there," men say, "then it will be all right for everybody; it must be a club from which no amount of black balls can exclude." On the other hand, under the most favourable circumstances, we feel it would be very unpleasant to meet Harpax again.

On the whole, I think we old folks had better give up the idea of taking pleasure altogether; but happiness is not denied us, and in some respects is easier of attainment than when we were young. There are at least no false joys. Unless a man is a born fool, he knows, after fifty, the worthlessness of all pretence. He does not wear tight boots, or cultivate the nobility. He is content with his own position, and has learnt that an ounce of comfort is worth a pound of swelldom. He has no more illusions, at all events, of the material kind. He knows what he likes, and sticks to it. He has no curiosity about strange sheries. He is quite sure as to whether the sea agrees with him, and that moving after dinner does not. *He may not "know himself" in a philosophical sense,*

but he is admirably posted up in that subject for all practical purposes. The accuracy of his views in this direction does not necessarily imply selfishness or even egotism; it is merely the fruit of long experience. Of course there are old men who think of nothing but themselves; but if you consult their contemporaries, you will find that the habit began with them some time ago. Selfish or not, old age is certainly inclined to be tender-hearted as regards little children; I don't mean rude, mischievous brats, whom nobody really likes but their mothers, but nice children. I have seen the tenderest friendships existing between April and November, the overtures for which have always come, of course, from the latter, from the six with the nought to the six without it; and I am inclined to think that children's happiness is shared by old people more than by those less mature. This is not, as some cynic may say, because we ourselves are nearing second childhood; it arises from the far-back recollection of our own youth (itself sufficient to inspire tenderness), and from the reflection, born of the fulness of our years, that it is well for these little ones to gather the roses while they may.

On the other hand, we do not "go a-wooing in our boys" with quite the gusto that has been imputed to us; it reminds us too much of our own vanished pleasures; and besides, it generally ends in our having

to make them (what, by-the-bye, they seldom make for *us*) an allowance.

Next to the young, as the years creep upon ourselves, we love and admire what is old. As a rule, though there are rare exceptions—Victor-Hugo-like old men, who hail every new invention as heaven-born, and behold in every gleam of promise the Sunrise—there are no such true conservatives as we old people. Change is abhorrent to us, even to the finding our slippers on one side of the fireplace instead of the other. We cling to old customs and old manners, to old books, old servants, and old friends. These last fit us like old boots, and are as welcome, and, if lost (for they are never worn out), are as difficult to replace. Never did the great London sage give a wiser piece of advice to us than to make friends with younger men, lest, being suffered by the cruel kindness of fate to survive our contemporaries, we should find ourselves without friends at all. It is advice, however, not easy to follow; for as, for swimming and running, we now find our joints too stiff, so for the exercise of new friendships (which require a certain nimbleness of spirit) our minds are too indolent and torpid. Some of us, indeed, have a certain mental agility, which itself, I have read, is to be deplored. "There is something," says a great authority on human nature, "in the very vivacity of old age which *is contemptible*." This is a hard saying, but not

altogether undeserved, if, as I imagine, "the authority" had in his mind that description of old man which may be called Falstaffian. Everyone knows that terrible line—

"The witless Falstaff of a hoary Hal;"

and even though the Hals be not hoary, anything more graceless than such a personage is not to be conceived. He may secure the society of youth by pretending to their vices, and by setting before them what is drawn from the impure wells of his remembrance—all the more dangerous when it sparkles—but never their friendship. Humanity stands aloof from him; at the very best a will-o'-the-wisp wandering over a waste of mud, he fails and wanes, and, having done his worst to lead astray, presently goes out in utter darkness, leaving behind him, instead of that gracious memory which is the old man's hope, an evil odour and the seeds of ill.

Old men have far other and better parts to play as regards their juniors, if they will. Some of us have power, some influence, some riches, and all of us, who have not misused our lives, some sympathy with those who need it. To us come the young with their confidences, their aspirations, their requests, that for various reasons cannot be made to those on whom they have nearer claims. The young inventor brings his project, the maiden her tender secret, the bashful

poet his lay. At the lowest we can encourage them, and put our experience at their service. If such help as we can render cannot be called a pleasure, it is only because the satisfaction we derive from it is so serene and lofty as to merit a higher name.

I have said that we have no illusions, but of course I did not mean to imply that we have got at the root of things. Our views of life may not be more correct than those of younger men, but such as they are they content us; and they are not liable to change. The same may be said of our views of death. As a rule, the older we grow, the less terrible death appears to us. We have lost so many of those we love, that we have more friends on the other shore than on this side. They have crossed the silent river, and are waiting for us somewhere. Unlike the child so exquisitely described by the Dorsetshire poet—

“She wore no black, she wore her white;
She wore no black, she wore her blue;
She never mourned another’s flight,
She was herself the first that flew—”

we, alas! are among the last to fly. To what is vaguely called “the Believer” this makes an enormous difference in the outlook. But surely to all of us it is something. To die, since these dear folks have all gone through that ordeal before us, cannot be such a very dreadful thing. I have never believed, as some *pious people* do, that the devil takes the majority of

our friends, just as he used to take all the best tunes; and, after all, let the parsons say what they will, we have not all been Neros nor even Napoleons.

Nevertheless, we that are old do fear death more than the young, for one thing: it is more dangerous than it was wont to be to those we love best. Every post breathes peril, every telegram speaks of loss. We look round on the few contemporaries who remain, and tremble. When we part from them on a voyage or on a journey, it seems no longer an *au revoir* that we are bidding them, but a good-bye. And the nearest and the dearest, how we cling to them and grudge their being out of our sight!

There is another fear, and a much more terrible one than that of death—namely, that of too long a life. Strangely enough, this terror, which is in the heart of every one of us, has seldom been alluded to by those who have discoursed upon this subject. "There is no man so old," says an ancient writer, "but thinks he may live a year;" he might well have added, "and hopes he may not do so." With every appliance that wealth and even affection can bestow, extreme old age is appalling. Swift, we are told, expired "a driveller and a show," but he had at least once been Swift. The spectators were not all contemptuous mockers; some surely pitied the wreck of what had held so rich a freight of genius. But to decline from ordinary old age into dotage, as happens

to so many of us—a ghastly present without a past! —*that*, indeed, is a thing to fear. Add to this a sense, however dim, of the necessity of working, and of our impotence to do so, and what need is there for the most zealous devil-worshipper to imagine a Gehenna?

FRAUDULENT GUESTS.

AMONG persons of mature years and judgment guests are few, though not necessarily infrequent. They have discovered by bitter experience that ninety-hundredths of the human race are not worth meeting at the convivial board at all; and of the tenth that remains, that only one at most is worth meeting twice. Even folks of a high degree of intelligence may occasionally be induced to dine out with a dull man; but they are not so foolish as to ask him to their own tables on that account. That notion of "a return" of hospitality, where the agreeableness is all on one side, is only fit for the public-house, where, when one has won a shilling game at bagatelle, it is thought a point of honour to give his adversary his "revenge." For my part, I cannot imagine why elderly gentlemen who have wits of their own and do not absolutely live on them (in which case the mere food may be an object) go to so-called "dinner-parties" at all—that is, to parties which are made up, like the atheist's world, "without a plan." They are almost always tempted, quite as much from sheer *ennui* as from anything at-

tractive in the viands, to eat and drink too much. They are bored to distraction, often without even the mitigation of tobacco; and they are kept up too late at night.

The older we grow, the more fastidious as a rule we become socially. We like the friends we can count upon—who are “as easy as an old shoe” with us; but we shrink from the new ones, especially, I need not say, from any that give the least suggestion of patent leather. There are those for whom the companionship of persons of title makes amends for anything; but I am speaking of a class who have over-lived such illusions and made up their minds, during the span left them in this world, to be comfortable.

Old friends, or, if new ones, nice ones; intelligent society with a humorous bent in it; the most perfect freedom of thought and speech: these alone to mature persons make social life worth living. All the rest is strained, pretentious, and uncomfortable.

As a very young man I once sought an introduction to a well-known woman of letters in London. She is not now of much importance, being dead and forgotten; but all literary persons had then an attraction for me (as indeed they have now), and I expressed a wish through a common friend to know her. “My dear fellow,” he wrote, after making his application, “*she* will have nothing to do with you. She

says she knows a great deal too many people already." At the time I thought this rather rude, but I have long learnt to envy that lady's moral courage. How delightful it would be, if one dared, to have that noble truth printed on one's card, and when new folks call upon us whom one does not want to know, to return them *this* by post:

"Mr. So and So's compliments, but he knows a great deal too many people already!"

But, however many fellow-creatures he knows, and is obliged to know, the wise man, "when he declineth" (a phrase which I have often thought may refer not only to his years but to his reluctance to accept "scratch" invitations), will have but few guests, since next to dining by himself, which in a man of social parts is a wicked waste, he resents dining with ordinary people. His guests, like the wines of the merchant, are "carefully selected" and of "the best growths;" some are "still," some are "sparkling," but they are all "sound." There is not a headache in a hogshead of them, far less a heartache. Though full of raillery, not one of them will wound another's feelings; there is sparring, but with the gloves; there is fencing, but with the button on the foil. Politics are forbidden. To discourse on the principles of art is not forbidden, for the same reason that parricide was not prohibited by the laws of Draco: such an outrage has never been contemplated. Wine, as wine,

and especially with reference to its cost, is, as a topic of talk, forbidden; any allusion to the British aristocracy, unless it be an historical one, is absolutely forbidden. Otherwise thought and tongue are free. Such guests, for my part, I would have every day, could I afford it.

I shrink from saying one syllable against such good fellows in the public ear; but even in these choice spirits there is something occasionally amiss, which, though in a manner born of their very excellence, demands reproof and remedy. Even the simplest of pretty village maidens is "pleased to find herself so fair;" and these excellent persons, though honest as the dawn, are not unaware of their own and each other's attractions. They therefore herd together a good deal. This, of itself, from the host's point of view, is inconvenient; they tell one another stories which they afterwards dare not repeat in company, from very shame. Let me not be misunderstood. There is nothing wrong in them; but, having already been confided to one member of the party, they cannot with decency be retold in his presence. This, however, is but a general disadvantage arising from the circumstances of the case. The social crime I have to complain of is when this drawback is made particular, and two or more persons engaged to the same dinner-table in the evening, meet of malice *pre-pense beforehand*—say at lunch—and exhaust their

several topics. I look upon this as not only unhand-some, but dishonest. They are no longer guests at all, in any true sense of the term; they are squeezed oranges, empty champagne bottles, paper bags that have been blown out and burst, and have no more pop in them to amuse anybody.

Of course they are conscious of the infamy of such conduct, and would not reveal it if they could help it; but they cannot conceal it. Brown and Jones did me the honour—I cannot say the pleasure—to dine with me the other day. Brown is a bright little creature, called familiarly “the Cork;” full of his quips and cranks (though of devout belief and the most exemplary moral habits). Jones is a very noble lawyer, with such experiences of human life as, when told as they should be, and as he knows how to tell them, are worth all the fictions in the world; both of them great acquisitions to any dinner-table, only—unfortunately—great friends. They did not arrive at my house together (mark that! from the very first they did their best to conceal the evidence of their crime), and I had no suspicion of any previous collusion. Brown exclaimed, “What, you here?” in his genial way, when he met Jones; and Jones in his impressive tones replied, “Good heavens, Brown I do declare!” These were the only observations that to my knowledge escaped them during the entire evening.

The reason of their unwonted silence was inexplicable to me. Brown is very abstemious and does not require any extraneous excitement, such as the enchantress Ayala, to set him going; but this evening he was as mute as a fish; Jones, who as usual drank like a fish, was equally tongue-tied. I ransacked my brain for an explanation of this phenomenon. There is a story told of a certain person still amongst us, whose information upon some topics was simply amazing. They were very various, and it was obvious his reading had not been confined to a few subjects: yet on others, not more abstruse, he never opened his lips. After much close watching, and comparing of notes among his friends, it was found that the things he knew so thoroughly all began with the early letters of the alphabet. He was, it turned out, superintending the commencement of an encyclopædia. This could not, however, be the explanation of the reticence of Brown or Jones, who, in the way of talking at least, were persons of genius, and certainly would not be deterred from the discussion of any topic from the trifling circumstance of their knowing nothing about it. Once, indeed, Brown began in his old lively manner—and stopped short: he had caught Jones's eye. Once Jones, in his fine rolling tones, got so far as "That reminds me——" and stopped short: he had caught Brown's eye.

The two circumstances, taken together, revealed to

a certain member of the company, a criminal judge keen to "track suggestion to its inmost cell," the secret of the guilty pair. He got up, and contrary to all precedent—for I need hardly say such things as after-dinner speeches are never tolerated amongst us—he denounced them. I see him now—with the gold-glasses he always uses in passing sentence of death, and behind which he has the faculty of shedding tears—the very embodiment of Justice!

"Gentlemen," he said, "there are two persons here who have outraged the laws of hospitality: it is not for our host to follow their example by reproving them; that painful duty must necessarily be undertaken by a fellow-guest, and I accept the odium and the burthen of it. They were invited here, like the rest of us, to take their share in conversation, to add their quota of entertainment to the general store; instead of which they have been dull as ditch-water, and dumb as a pair of dumb-bells. They have come here as much on false pretences as a man who sits down to dinner at a coffee-house without a sixpence in his pocket to pay for it. Good heavens, gentlemen!" (here he wept), "is our host a coffee-house keeper that he should be treated so? Even as they were eating their oysters and sipping their Chablis, I saw guilt—conscious guilt—depicted on their countenances. They avoided one another's glances—a sure sign of complicity in crime. Mark my words, gentle-

men, *those men have met before to-day*—from what I know of Jones, probably at lunch—and have already said to one another everything they had to say. Not a story has the one to offer us, not a witticism has the other; they have exhausted themselves to the dregs. It is true that they are not utterly lost to shame; they have not ventured in this company to commence an observation with ‘As I was saying to Jones to-day,’ or, ‘As I was saying to Brown;’ they have not dared, I admit, to hand round at this table their *réchauffés*: they have preferred to keep an infamous silence.” There was a great deal more of it, for when the judge is not sitting (that is, when he is on his legs) he is apt to forget his dignity and become a counsel again; but I will only add his peroration. “In conclusion,” he observed, “and considering the circumstances under which these unhappy men have ventured to take their seats (which might just as well have been empty for any advantage their occupiers have conferred upon us) at this social board, I regard their conduct as little short of felonious; they are ‘Fraudulent Guests.’”

There are worse cases than this, however. The other day I came upon a dear old friend of mine, Robert Thompson, who lives in the country, walking in Regent Street with his brother John. The latter is a London man, with whom I guessed, and rightly, *Robert was staying*. John is a dull, uninteresting fel-

low, to whom, but for Robert's sake, I should never give myself the trouble of nodding; but the "ties of blood" which bound them together made my friend's brother (to that limited extent) *my* friend. Indeed, as I found them together and much desired Robert's company, I was so rash as to say "Come, both of you, and dine with me to-morrow; now, do!" "With pleasure," responded John promptly. He did not often get even a "scratch" invitation of that sort, and clinched the matter at once. Robert, on the other hand, looked distressed. "I am so very sorry," he said (and so the dear fellow really was; sorry for *me*); "but the fact is I am pledged to be in Warwickshire to-morrow." I wished John in Warwickshire also—at Coventry; but I had to entertain him: a Fraudulent Guest, if ever there was one.

One more "shocking example," and I have done. Blathers, of our Club, is my detestation. He has only one idea in the world—pigeon-shooting—which, of course (and this is so far to his credit), is not his own. He belongs to the Gun Club, and knew the Claimant, who was one of its crack shots. That is absolutely all he has to talk about. I had never conceived of such a person as a guest even in a nightmare; yet he became mine. Two intimate friends were to dine with me on a certain Saturday to talk over a pet scheme of ours, whereby "an obvious void in theological literature" was to be supplied. It has

not been started even yet, so I will not particularize it; but it was a very private and confidential affair. As one of them lived on the Continent, and the other at Caterham (where people are always writing to the papers to say the trains don't fit), it was a difficult job to bring them together; but I had effected it. At the last moment I remembered a certain regulation of our Club which had not been fulfilled, and looked in to remedy it. In the hall I found Blathers putting on his great-coat; with his cab at the door, previously (as I took for granted) to going down to Brighton, which he always enlivens by his presence from Saturday to Monday.

"You are not dining here to-night?" I said, in as airy a tone as a constitutional hesitation in my speech admitted of.

"No," he said; "I'm off."

So, thinking he would suit my purpose as well as another, I replied:

"The fact is, my dear fellow, I've got a couple of friends, not members of the Club, dining with me to-night at seven, and if you will so far oblige me——"

"Delighted!" he interrupted; "proud to meet your friends. I'm only going as far as my gunsmith's, in Bond Street. I'll be here at seven sharp."

He was gone in a moment, and was coming back again to dine with me! To think that a natural *infirmité*—a mere slowness in verbal delivery—should

have brought about so frightful an infliction was enough to make one a pessimist for life. It is the rule of our Club, that when we have two friends to dine, we must secure the name of another member for the second; and what I was about to say to Blathers was, "Will you so far oblige me as to lend me your *name?*" But as to borrowing *him*, I should as soon have thought of buying him. Nevertheless he came: the most fraudulent, surely, of all Fraudulent Guests.

NATURALNESS.

Mrs. Skewton: "We are so dreadfully artificial."
Dombey and Son.

I HAVE often wondered at what epoch it was that mankind first began to use speech to conceal their thoughts. In the Golden Age, no doubt, folks spoke what naturally occurred to them, with the happiest results, *i.e.* those who said offensive things were instantly tomahawked, while agreeable people lived to see their children's children—a genuine and bright example of the survival of the fittest. Yet when one thinks of the bores who "in their thousands" now infest society, that theory seems absolutely untenable. On the other hand, it is mere Pessimism to contend that bores are necessary evils. It is not nature, but the absence of naturalness, which begets them, and which lies at the root of all our social dulness. It has been well said that if a man, however humble, should at the end of his days set down his actual experiences, including his real thoughts (very different from his "philosophical reflections"), that simple story of human life from the *cradle to the deathbed* would be the most interesting

book in the world. And what is true of the whole is true of the part. If people would only say what they really think concerning this and that, and above all would say nothing about matters on which they never think at all, social life would be much more interesting. What we hear of the "Decay of Conversation" is true enough, and the phrase in which the complaint is couched is exceedingly appropriate; there is no want of conversation, but it is decayed, rotten; there is neither honest thought nor genuine humour in it, but only pretence and affectation. Æstheticism has much to answer for in this matter, and may be said to have driven away what wit and sense still lingered in our drawing-rooms. It is the opportunity of fools; there is no one who has learnt the terms of art who does not think himself qualified to talk about it; and others consent to listen to him upon the understanding that they are presently to have their innings. A very few writers only have shown themselves competent to describe the magnificent effects of sunrise; it would be a dangerous subject to the most eloquent of talkers; yet hundreds of splendidly apparelled men and women are ready every evening to deluge one with their descriptions of some copy of sunrise done with a brush. If the picture were in the room, there might be something to be said about it; but the picture is in Munich, or in Dresden, and these people seem to think that by their chatter about its tints and

glows they can not only recall it to one's recollection, but recreate it for the benefit of those who have never seen it. When a splendid landscape is lying before him, the man who is most worthy of it does not go into verbal hysterics about it; and though it sinks into his soul, to be reproduced for his pleasure and refreshment afterwards, he will never dream of boring you for half an hour in a London drawing-room with a second-hand view of it: and if Nature cannot stand this reproduction, how much less can Art! Pictures may, of course, be talked about in their absence, like anything else, but when they are used as texts to be preached upon extempore, one's mind reverts with envy to that great painter who could shift his trumpet and take snuff, till such rhapsodies were over. For affectation and pretence our present art-talk has no parallel except among wine-bibbers who will sometimes discourse about the vintages; but in that case one may good-naturedly say that the dates go well with the olives. One doesn't expect much in the way of talk from toppers; and the wine *is there*, though where it comes from they may not be quite so certain as they think they are. Moreover, when it comes to the vintages, it is probable that the company is more or less drunk, whereas your art-talkers have no such excuse; they are seldom intoxicated, save with the "exuberance of their own verbosity." They talk for *talking's sake*, or "for the gallery," and, what is worse,

their opinions are almost always second-hand, so that there is no sort of naturalness about them. Nevertheless (which shows how a hothouse plant can be made to appear indigenous to the soil) they often express them with great vehemence and acrimony.

Mr. A., a collector of pictures, while in company with a friend in his gallery, was once called upon by B., an art critic. "Why, you have got one of Martin's pictures!" cried the latter, his æsthetic indignation making him forgetful of the presence of a stranger. "What on earth have you done *that* for? You surely don't think Martin a *painter*. A more ridiculous, melodramatic——"

"Hush, hush!" whispered A., behind his hand; "that gentleman yonder *is* Martin."

"Well, well, perhaps you are right!" said B., changing front in face of the enemy. "It is just as well to have a specimen of every artist. When I said Mr. Martin was not a painter, I should have added not a painter of the ordinary type; he is a school in himself; and though eccentric, it must be owned that he has the eccentricity of genius. I should like, of all things, to be introduced to him, but I haven't time," and off he scuttled.

Mr. A. used to say that life was thenceforth embittered to him from the fear that B. should some day meet the real Martin and find he was not the man to whom he had apologized profusely and unnecessarily;

but for my part I think A. quite justified in playing that little trick upon his visitor, whose condemnation of the painter was probably no whit more genuine than his laudation of him. The very indignation of such people is cant, and very cheap cant.

Years ago it was the poet's complaint that, ground in the social mill, we rubbed each other's angles down, and lost in form and gloss the picturesque of man and man; but we have gone much further than that since those lines were written. We have lost even the characteristics of sex, and men now talk like women, without their charm. There was never such an opportunity for a person of either sex to make in society what it is pleased to call "a success" as at present, if, combined with a desire to please, he or she should only have the courage to be natural. The former attribute is the very salt of social life, and more conducive to its enjoyment than all the wit in the world: the absence of it is unpardonable, since it shows at the best a selfish indifference to the happiness of others. Yet such is the dearth of genuineness that I have noticed that, even without the wish to please, a man who says what he thinks receives from society a certain sort of welcome. He may be gruff, sententious, and egotistic, but though he is a bear he is not a bore, and much is forgiven him on the ground of his being an original. Nor under the circumstances is society to be blamed *for tolerating him*, since even a cutting draught is

better than no fresh air at all. It is on this account that Cetewayo, though he had not good manners—and who, we are told, when he heard Mr. John Dunn's name mentioned had a habit of spitting “in all directions,” like the llama at the Zoological Gardens—was so popular with society during his short stay in England. Who can withhold his admiration from that “Let us go,” with which he rose from his seat when the sermon became intolerable, and left the church, “followed by his faithful retainers”? A majestic burst of natural instinct, that showed him every inch a king!

Insincerity in conversation was probably at its very worst during the late Hamilton sale. Sham admiration touched its apogee—its greatest distance from truth and common-sense—in connection with that crazy furniture and its infamous associations. The folly of giving £6,000 for a Louis Quatorze table was portentous, yet not so amazing as the interest professed to be felt in such a fact by the people who didn't buy it. Who can believe, even with the sincerest contempt for the intelligence of his fellow-creatures, that they really cared twopence about it? Yet if that table had been the original Table of Testimony newly found upon the Mount, or if the gewgaws that enriched it had been the lost Urim and Thummim, it could not have been discussed with more eagerness and assiduity.

In these days, with their fine crops of theories that only flourish in a mist of words, there is nothing more uncommon than to meet a man who has something to tell you at first-hand; something to show you that he has found for himself in the book of human life. Yet there are such people still.

At a great house, full one evening as an aviary with brilliant chatterers, I chanced to come across such a man, who perhaps interested me all the more from his contrast with his surroundings. An Illustrious Personage was expected, which caused a flutter of excitement among the guests, and gave Anecdotes of the Court precedence over other topics; but nevertheless an enthusiastic young gentleman in spectacles upon my left was explaining the principles of Wagner's music to a young lady, who "stared with great eyes, and smiled with alien lips," while on my right a matron of two-and-twenty was narrating to a select circle an entrancing story of a china teapot that her husband had picked up on their honeymoon, and which (through its having a *fleur-de-lis* where certainly no one would have expected to find such a thing) was, in point of fact, priceless. In the midst of this affected jabber my attention was attracted to a man of military aspect, but without that jaded and indifferent air which the defenders of our country are wont to assume in the haunts of fashion; he had a bright interested expression, such as spectators who are really pleased,

and do not only wish to please their host and hostess, wear at private theatricals. After a word or two of mutual introduction, through the good offices of a photograph-album that lay near us, I made bold to ask whether in such a scene he felt as happy as he looked. "I do indeed," he said with an amused smile. "What one hears and sees here may be very false and foolish, but the fact is that is the very reason why I like it. I see too much of real life at home, and live too much among real people."

I felt very much inclined to ask him, like the imaginary interlocutor (Wonderment) in *The Bridge of Sighs*, "Where is your home?" Who was his father, who was his mother, who was his sister, who was his brother, that they should be so natural and different from everybody else? I suppose I looked all that, for he observed, as if in reply to an inquiry, "I am the governor of a gaol."

Everyone who is in such a position has exceptional opportunities for the observance of human life, and is therefore more or less interesting. That is why a doctor is "better company" than a member of any other profession: he has seen his fellow-creatures *en déshabillé*, and as free from fine speeches as fine clothes. The sick man has no breath to waste, and "the gallery" he has in his mind is too high overhead to be impressed by his poor acting. And thus it is with prisoners, who, being for the time at least out of

the world, are more honest (except with the chaplain) than the people that are in it. I fraternized with my new friend at once, and found him charming; his talk, compared with that which surrounded us, was like coming upon a clear fresh brook in the midst of a desert full of mirages; or rather it was like honest wine from the wood, which has not been drugged or sweetened for the fashionable market, till not a drop of the juice of the grape remains in it.

After several glasses, I ventured to inquire what was the most remarkable incident he had met with in his professional career. He stroked his chin and smiled drily. I would have given anything to know what he had in his mind, but *that* I felt quite sure he was not going to tell me. He had recalled it, only to dismiss it as being quite unadapted to the place and time. It is one of the disadvantages of a fashionable assembly (though it affects only a very few people) that no one ever dares to tell in it his best story. Even as it was (*i.e.* with his second-best one), the Governor dropped his voice lest the Wagner man and the china woman should be scandalized by the touch of nature. "I cannot 'adorn a tale,' as some of us can," he said with a smile that I thought remarkably pleasant; "but I will tell you the thing just as it happened.

"One of the most curious experiences that ever *befell me* was during a provincial engagement, when

I had Clayland Gaol in Loamshire. The population were agricultural and uncultivated, and of course the most ignorant as well as the most degraded came my way. One of them was a woman of sixty, a murderess.

"The chaplain could do nothing with her—he very seldom can with those who are condemned to death; they have something else to listen to than mere words. Days and even weeks before a timber has been raised, or a nail has been driven in, they hear the gallows being put up. This poor creature, however, was not troubled in that way; she had not the imagination for it. She had not even the instinctive disinclination for her fate that the dumb animal feels on the threshold of the slaughterhouse. There were no 'good-byes' to make, for she had neither relative nor friend in the world: the world she was to leave on Monday.

"On the Sunday night she sent for me. It had been a pouring day, as most November days in Loamshire are, and as I entered her cell the sound of the rain upon the roof heightened the melancholy effect of the scene to an extraordinary degree. To those who knew the circumstances of the case she was scarcely an object of pity, for the murder she had committed was a most brutal and appalling one; but it was impossible to behold her without sharing her wretchedness. She was standing under the barred blank window with her eyes fixed upon it, listening apparently to the

splash of the storm, but she turned quickly round as I came in and faced me.

"Guv'nor,' she said, 'is it true that I am to be hung to-morrow?'

"It was not easy to reply to such a question in words, and I only inclined my head gravely.

"Is it far from here—I mean the gallows?'

"About fifty yards; in front of the gaol gates.'

"Ay, ay; I mind the place well; I saw John Norris hung there when I was a young gal. Then one will walk to it, won't one?'

"There was a touch of disappointment in her tone which I could not understand, though I guessed the reason of it afterwards.

"Yes, we shall all walk.'

"Very good! I've been thinking of summat as I should like to do. Will you grant me a last favour, Guv'nor?'

"I told her, of course, that anything that lay in my power, and which my duty permitted me to do, would be done for her.

"Well, to-morrow will be wet, you see, that's certain. Now, never in all my life has it happened to me to walk under a silk umbrella. Will you let me do it, just this once?'

"I gave her, of course, the required assurance, and her warders reported afterwards that she went to bed *in good spirits* and passed an excellent night. Her

first words on being awakened in the morning were to inquire if it rained, and, on being informed that it did, she expressed her satisfaction. The rest of the sad ceremony seemed to interest her very little, but never shall I forget how her dull hard face brightened up at the sight of the new silk umbrella that was presented to her. She held it over her head to the gallows-foot, with a hand which, if it trembled at all, did so with conscious pride."

My friend had scarcely finished his story ere the Illustrious Personage arrived, when the efforts of the ambitious to hear him speak and see him smile, and even to catch sight of the back of his shoulders, rendered further conversation impossible. To have met such a man, however, as my Governor, and in such a scene, was a piece of good fortune to be thankful for. If he couldn't adorn a tale he could point a moral, for as we were sundered by the too loyal throng, he whispered slily, "There are others beside my poor old woman, you see, who like for once in their lives to stand under a silk umbrella."

SUCCESS IN FICTION.

THERE is the same "fatal facility" about the profession of literature that belongs to octosyllabic verse. It is not only that pen and ink and paper are within the reach of the poorest, and leisure in unwished-for abundance, but the trick of setting down what are called by courtesy "one's ideas" in writing comes very easily to a good many people. It is almost as common as the gift of small talk, that "one weak, washy, everlasting flow" of words, which, except among Fenimore Cooper's red Indians, with their charming and expressive "Ugh," is found among all peoples, nations, and languages, and is confidently believed by its possessors to be conversation. Every editor receives annually hundreds of manuscripts that leave nothing to be desired in the way of expression, and, if there was anything to be expressed, would be acceptable enough. Indeed, this deficiency (though a drawback, from the publishing point of view) itself extorts a kind of admiration; one turns over page after page of beautiful English, and wonders what it is all about; *it leaves a certain vague but stately impression upon*

the mind, like a regiment of soldiers marking time. To what end, one asks one's self, are these well-chosen adjectives, these excellent substantives, these respectable pronouns, all marshalled together and governed by their proper verbs? I remember to have studied in my childhood a little book called "Mary's Grammar" (the only intelligible work upon the subject, by-the-bye, that I ever did meet with), in which all the parts of speech were personified. Mr. Adjective, Mr. Verb, and Miss Past Participle (an old maid, I suppose) really lived and moved and had their being in it, and were substantial entities. But this is unfortunately not the case with the compositions I have in my mind, where the parts of speech are intended to be auxiliary, but help me to nothing. An example that will occur to every well-regulated mind—to everyone, that is, who goes to hear them—is found in sermons. How often has one had to listen to some "snowy-banded, delicate-handed, dilettante" young gentleman in the pulpit, whose discourse for five-and-twenty minutes is absolutely diaphanous and elusive, except for the occasional introduction of the text, to which the attention, half drowned in the sea of words, fixes itself and clings till it is washed off again. When, in the somewhat cynical words of the Rubric, he "lets us depart," it is absolutely impossible to say what it has all been about. It must be remembered, however, that the preacher has a hard task. It is given only to

a very few to make, from a spiritual standpoint, spiritual things tangible—a very difficult and dangerous feat, reminding one of the (reported) achievements of those Indian thaumaturgists who, before performing their prodigies, balance themselves up in mid-air to begin with. The priest, too, is weighted by his sense of reverence, which forbids him to speak familiarly even of such matters as he does understand. The professor of ethics, who has certainly no such scruples, does not succeed much better in making himself intelligible.

The disciples of literature of whom I speak have no such excuse, yet are equally inefficacious. They besiege the Temple of Fame in thousands, and exclaim with indignation that envy and jealousy, in the concrete form of "Clique," have closed its gates against them. "With this excellent gift of literary expression of ours," they inquire, "how is it otherwise possible that we do not succeed?" The answer is plain but impolite: "Because, my good sirs, you have nothing particular to say." It is a very common circumstance, and one of which there is no ground to complain. The vast majority of the human race, amongst which are the best, the bravest, and perhaps even the wisest of us, are in the same condition. The greatest statesmen, the greatest lawyers, the greatest soldiers, have often laboured, and still labour, under the same *deficiency*, which, however, is no disadvantage. They

have no particular message to deliver to the human race; but neither they nor it are any the worse for it. The word "message," by-the-bye, is open to misconstruction; it is the favourite term of "highfalutin" writers, when describing some pet poet, generally dead. Rossetti, I observe, for instance, is frequently spoken of in this way pretty much as if he were Moses. The founder of this school, though he was much more genial and had none of their affectations, was the old Scotch critic, George Gilfillan. He would speak of rather "one-horse" literary productions as though they were coaches and four. "It is no more possible to imagine a world without an Evangeline," he would say, "than without"—I forget what, but perhaps a sun. In his view, every creditable stanza was a "message," and the author had a divine commission to compose it.

In my opinion, this special licence is not necessary for the publication of a literary work (though it is probable that all men who succeed in letters have a consciousness of their peculiar fitness for that calling); but what is absolutely indispensable to success is a clear conception of what one has to say. Their deficiency in this respect is the cause of failure of that great army of martyrs (to the "bad taste" of the public and the "neglect" of editors), the amateurs. When one's own ideas upon a subject are hazy, how is it possible to dilate upon it without its becoming

more and more hazy! It is like submitting a bad photograph to the process of enlargement, by which the defects become exaggerated, and what likeness it did possess disappears. Yet nothing is more familiar to me, in that unfortunate position of literary adviser to the human race, in which one act of indiscretion* has placed me, than the inquiry from people whose talents, tastes, and even sex I know nothing of, "Would you be kind enough to give me a subject to write about? I find that my only difficulty." Very likely; but it is, unfortunately, as regards imaginative literature at least, an insuperable one. With respect to journalism, in which is to be found, of course, very admirable literary work, this, it must be admitted, is not the case. The suggester of the subject and the man who writes upon it are often different persons. Years ago I had the compliment paid me of being asked by the editor of a great political organ to become a leading-article writer. I expressed my acknowledgments, but ventured to hint that I had not the necessary knowledge, and, in short, nothing particular to say upon the matters in question. "My good sir," said the great man encouragingly, "we will stuff you like a chicken." The story-teller who is to make any mark in the world cannot be stuffed. He may, indeed, get his first conception of his story from a

* The writing of the paper, "The Literary Calling," in the *Nineteenth Century*; since reprinted in *Some Private Views*.

chance conversation, or from a newspaper paragraph, or even possibly from a dream; but the main trunk of the tale and the chief ramifications of it must be his own. Moreover, having once got it, he must let it grow. The germ of a plot in the true novelist's mind is as a grain of mustard-seed; its vegetation in that fertile soil, if it be let alone, is tropical; but if he proceeds with it prematurely, it produces mere mustard and cress.

It is the impulse of all young writers who find themselves struck with an idea, instead of presenting the other cheek for more, to sit down and begin operations. Yet they can hardly commit a graver error; the longer they chew the cud of their plot the better. They may dwell upon it, pen in hand, if it must be so; but that should be only to draw the outline and chronicle suggestions; they should think upon it, "in the steamship, in the railway," or in "following the plough upon the mountain-side," if that happens to be their occupation; at high noon, and in the lonely watches of the night—in a word, everywhere and at all times (except, I need hardly say, in church). Their story will in time grow upon them, till they begin to lead two lives, one of the work-a-day kind, and the other amongst the scenes and characters that they have thus evolved, not from their "inner consciousness," but from that union of imagination and observation, the offspring of which never fails to receive a

welcome from the world and is sometimes recognised as Genius. They must also have faculty of insight into character. I doubt whether a man who makes mistakes in choosing his friends can ever become a novelist. This gift of intuition, however, has its drawbacks; like all others, it is increased by cultivation, and in the end is apt to render its possessor not only fastidious (which deprives him of the pleasures of general society), but incapable of looking upon those he loves, and to whose weaknesses he would fain be blind, with uncritical eyes. One whose knowledge of mankind is now universally acknowledged, and who had had it sharpened in this way by professional study, once playfully offered his services to a city friend in a large way of business as a moral detective. "If you will give me ten minutes' conversation with any client," he said, "I will tell you if he is a scoundrel or not, and separate for you your sheep from your goats." "Thank you very much," replied the other frankly, "but your office would be a sinecure; we have only to do with goats."

Fertility of imagination, then, observation, and intuition may be said to be the natural gifts that are essential to the success of the novelist. Without them, it is just possible, through some particular incident making an extraordinary impression on his mind, that a man may write a single narrative (not a novel) that *will bring him some reputation*; but that lucky stroke

will not be repeated, and if story-telling is to be his profession, he must possess other attributes, of a more ordinary kind indeed, but hardly less essential to success. He must not spare pains, nor shrink from trouble. There is a foolish notion abroad that unless the spirit moves a writer in some almost supernatural manner, his work will never rise to excellence, and that the very necessity of study and forethought almost presupposes an absence of genius. It is quite true that some of the most admirable poems of our language have been written at a sitting, and under a strong impulse of the mind (or, if you will, of the soul) that falls little short of inspiration; but it is an error to suppose that whole novels break forth from an author's imagination in three volumes. Anyone who has read with care the lives of our great novelists must be aware, indeed, that quite the contrary is the case. The idea, it is true, may be born after that fashion, but the working it out involves toil and study, the reading of unattractive books, travel, and a hundred inconveniences abhorrent to the indolent mind. Unhappily, the literary mind is naturally indolent. In many of what are called "the inferior works" of our great writers, failure is distinctly to be traced, not to any falling off in the writer's powers, but to that disinclination to take pains which comes with advancing years, especially when accompanied with popularity. Sure of his audience, the author is too often tempted

to let this stand as it is, and that run as it will, rather than trouble himself, as of old, to make sure of his ground, to avoid discrepancies, or carefully to collect his threads together at the close of his weaving. The same thing occurs in ordinary life: the merchant, once so keen in his business affairs, becomes automatic; the parson, formerly so conscientious and painstaking about his sermons, discharges that duty in a perfunctory manner. This slipshod system, dangerous to the best-established reputation, is fatal to the young novelist. By him, at all events, success is never found that way; it comes by an opposite road.

There is a master besides reputation, though included in it, that is generally of some consequence to the man of letters, but to which I feel some delicacy in alluding. The novelist is not only understood by the public to possess inspiration, but also in a manner to live upon it, or at all events on something like it—air. The notion of getting money by literature is considered vulgar, and “voted low.” Still, even the gorgeous butterfly feeds on something, and it is, therefore, hardly to be wondered at that the same necessity is imposed upon the denizens of Grub Street. Among the items of success in fiction, it may therefore not be wholly degrading to allude to that of finance. As indolence detracts from excellence in *literature*, it is also apt to diminish the profits to be

derived from it much more than in other callings. In no other will a man who is bent on success in it make it secondary, as men of letters so often do, to that of pleasure. The rising barrister, ambitious to rise higher as well as to fill his purse, will require something much more tempting than a fine morning to make him give up going to chambers, and pass the day in the country; nor does he permit the convivialities of the evening to keep him up till the small hours, and therefore to disorganize him for the work of the ensuing day. It is recorded, indeed, of the greatest wit that has ever set our tables in a roar, that he was wont to send round on "soda-water mornings" to a fellow scribe for "ink," an euphemistic term implying a request that he would be so good as to do his work for him; but, though the gentleman in question enjoyed a high reputation in letters, he could scarcely be said to have been a conspicuous example of material success. Even indisposition, which is often only another name for disinclination for work, should not be lightly permitted to interfere with literary labour. If once a man of letters permits the consideration of his not feeling quite in the humour to excuse his taking holiday, he will find that sort of inspiration occur to him pretty often; of course there are many examples of writers that have done well for themselves in spite of this weakness, but they would have done much better if they had not given in to it;

nor have men of the highest rank in literature, such as Scott and Dickens, despised those virtues of diligence and industry which are absurdly supposed to be inconsistent with great natural gifts. The vulgar phrase "It is dogged as does it" is almost as applicable to success in fiction as in law or physics. It is not too much to say that there have been more failures among men of high promise in letters through neglect of this common virtue of application than in any other calling. The axiom adopted by the children in "Liliput Levee," "Never do to-day what can be put off till to-morrow," has unhappily been always a favourite one with the soldiers of Captain Pen, and has sadly interfered with their promotion. As a matter of fact, there is no trade, however mechanical, that requires punctuality more than the profession of literature as it exists to-day. It is possible, indeed, as happened (late in life, however) in the case of our most popular novelist, that the imagination will not stir without the stimulus of "the thunder of the presses" demanding their tale of copy; but even leaving out the unpleasant contingency, that the writer may be seized with sudden illness* and not be able to come to time, it will hardly

* An eminent Scottish publisher, the proprietor of a well-known magazine, used always to refuse to begin any novel in serial unless the whole of the manuscript was placed in his hands, upon the ground that "a man might die." The example of Dickens, Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, and Trollope, who all left unfinished

be contended that this is a wholesome or natural state of things.

It may surely be taken for granted that no man's work is the better for being hurried, or for the necessity of its being ready within a certain short space of time; and I need hardly say that the value of a man's literary labour is much enhanced by the knowledge, soon acquired among publishers, that his punctuality may be absolutely relied on. In these days, when novels appear in serial coincidentally in three or four English-speaking countries, to be well beforehand with his work is to the writer of fiction a very important consideration, since it enables him to make arrangements for its distribution. The days are coming, though they will not come in my time, when the popular novelist will reap these advantages much more fully; but even then the soil he cultivates will not be of that sort of which it has been said that when you tickle it with a hoe it laughs with a harvest.

While the more he reads the better, the writer of fiction must be careful not to become too bookish, and above all he must avoid such studies as cause the mind to run in grooves. Readers resent too much quotation in a story, and especially the evidence of "cram." An extreme example of this latter error is to be found in the "Last Days of Pompeii," which, serials behind them, would (had he lived to see it) have amply corroborated his views.

however attractive to the young, repels the mature mind by the cheap learning with which it bristles, and the impertinent accuracy of its foot-notes. For other men of letters the library is the place whence they gather their ideas and "hive their sweet thoughts for putting into books;" but the source of the novelist's productions is or should be the page of human nature, and he must learn to read it as he runs. He should, of course, mix much with his fellow-creatures; but if this is confined to what is called "going into society," it will profit him but little. The upper ten thousand is a very small world, and by no means a picturesque one; its "views" are as conventional as itself; even when it is not dull—and there is nothing duller than your ordinary dinner-party—it is shallow; nor, in truth, is there much to be got out of it beyond first impressions. The true novelist should go further afield. Of the evil consequences of not doing so, we have only too many examples. Even in the case of such a master as Thackeray, when society and its hangers-on are taken out of his works, how scanty is their population! The same observation may be made on Trollope. With Scott and Dickens and George Eliot it is not so. The cause of this exclusiveness is not far to seek: it is indolence. The popular novelist is asked everywhere, and it is less trouble to accept invitations than to decline them. Moreover, there is *something* pleasant, no doubt, in being thus fêted,

while to go out of one's way in search of "character" is decidedly unpleasant. It is easier to sit at home and tax the memory than to go abroad and refresh it by observation. If the British novelist would be successful, by-the-bye, he must not go abroad for his materials. He may visit the United States and lay his scenes there, or the American novelist may visit England and lay his scenes here, but neither of them will achieve success (worthy to be called such) if he places his life-drama on the Continent and makes his *tramatis personæ* foreigners. English readers "cannot abide" foreigners. They know nothing about them, and are very far from taking *omne ignotum pro magnifico*. Of course this is not true of persons of fashion and position, who often know more about France and Italy, at least, than about their own country. But it is comparatively easy to be a fashionable novelist; I am speaking of how to become a popular one.

It is rather curious that great popularity has been very seldom achieved by any writer, with both sexes. There are men's novelists, and there are women's novelists. Not one woman in ten thousand ever reads Fielding, I suppose; it may be said that his coarseness repels them, which, indeed, is likely enough; but even when Fielding was not considered coarse he was never popular with ladies; they preferred Richardson. Men read novels now much more than they used to. Politicians and judges are so good as to

tell us that they "often take up a novel," as Sarah Battle used to relax her gigantic intellect over a book; but women still form the majority of the readers of fiction. They require the delineation of the softer passion in detail. (I am not speaking of the "vicious circle," who have vicious writers of their own sex to pander to them, but of women in general, our pure wives and sisters and daughters.) They like description, and relish minute analysis of motive. They shrink from strong situations (Lefanu appals them); they seldom appreciate satire; they do not care for high spirits, or for humour, which is to them no disinfectant of coarseness; and on almost all these matters men have opposite tastes. I can only recall two novelists who can be said, in any extended sense, to have made conquest of both sexes. No writer, of course, can choose for himself in this matter; he must needs address his own proper audience; but there is no question, under the present conditions of literature, at least, upon which road popularity lies.

Success will never crown his efforts, let his genius be what it may, unless he possesses the simpler virtues to which I have alluded. Nay, even possessing them, there is one sort of success, the greatest of all, which he will not make, though it is possible that his grandson may do so. The man who has arrived nearer to it than any other is Charles Dickens, but *even he fell far short of it*. I speak of the success

that shall befall the first great novelist who is welcomed, not by tens of thousands or by hundreds of thousands—for that happens even now—but by millions of readers. At present—and so it will be, perhaps, for generations to come—to the great bulk of even the reading community—*i.e.*, of those who read at all—our greatest writers in all descriptions of literature are practically unknown. The first with whom it will become acquainted are undoubtedly the writers of fiction, but how long it will be before that introduction takes place it is impossible to guess. There is no master of the ceremonies to effect it. The hands that reach down from above and touch our eyes with tears, are held out in vain to the multitude; to the mighty voices of the Past its ears are deaf; for it Genius itself has no magic—nay more, it is repugnant to it.

More than one attempt has been made of late by enterprising publishers to tap this tremendous reservoir; assisted by the ablest hands, they have sunk their artesian well (some magazine of a high class) through this obstinate stratum of ignorance and stupidity, with very indifferent success. The multitude still prefers “the tongs and the bones” to the most celestial music. The secret of success as regards circulation among the million is a very different matter from that with which I have hitherto been dealing. It has nothing to do with genius, or study, or observa-

tion, but requires a certain knack of expressing commonplace ideas in such a manner that the commonplace reader exclaims to himself, with rapture, "Why, that is the very thing I have often thought myself, but did not know how to set it down in words!" It is a mistake to suppose that tales of blood and thunder have now any great popularity; readers, even of the humblest class, are already beginning to despise the monstrosities of literature, but they still prefer to be taught, as it were, by pupil teachers—minds only a very little keener than their own—rather than by masters of the craft of story-telling. The immense popularity of Mr. Tupper's poems, as I have elsewhere maintained, was undoubtedly owing to this cause, though, of course, even he never reached the lowest stratum. Until the sun of "Proverbial Philosophy" arose, a great class of people, who had never ventured on anything but prose, were delighted to find that they could understand what purported to be poetry. When true poetry shall be appreciated by the masses (I don't mean those miraculously intelligent Scottish peasants whom William and Mary Howitt were always meeting with on their travels, but the real millions,) the conditions under which literature is written will be changed. A more obvious example of my meaning may be gathered from what now passes among the crowd for humour. Even at penny read-

ings, the audiences of which are comparatively select, it is not the best humourist, but the third-rate ones, that are most applauded. What passes for "exquisite fooling" at the Music Hall is so ineffably dull as to produce in an intelligent mind a feeling approaching to loathing. In such places, even the drolleries of Hood would be as unintelligible as the wit of Præd or Locker. Dickens alone, by reason, perhaps, of his dealing with the classes in question in his fictions, as much as by his transcendent genius, has any acceptance in these Cimmerian regions; and even he only here and there. I was once conversing upon this subject with the proprietor of a certain periodical, more notorious for its popularity than for its literary merit, and ventured to ask what, in his opinion, was the secret of its extraordinary success. He replied, quite frankly, that it consisted in "never flying over the heads" of his subscribers, and in having for his editor, not, of course, a fool, but a sort of foolometer, who thoroughly understood the limits of their intelligence. It should be added, to this gentleman's credit, that he had more than once tried an infusion of genuine merit in his literary bill of fare, with the most discouraging and disastrous results.

It is hardly necessary to say that no good writer—unlike that Lord Chief Justice who drank beer to put himself on a par with the puisne judges—has ever

succeeded in writing down to the level of his readers; nor is it a course to be recommended, even if it were possible to follow it. The influence of good fiction is at present in its infancy; or rather, they whose suffrages will one day spell "success" for those who shall supply it, are but babes, and have as yet no appetite for strong meat.

THE OLD BABY.

TAKING advantage of the facilities afforded by the latest transatlantic invention, the Thought-reflector—a boon indeed to those who are too idle, or incompetent, to express their ideas in speech, and a very great improvement upon the rude machine which could only iterate mere words—I venture to submit to a discerning public the grievance under which not I alone, but very many of my fellow-infants are labouring. Few and favoured are those children-in-arms who have no cause to range themselves under my banner. Blessed is the babe whose parents have preserved the infant in never associating with it a rival and a surper. Happy indeed is that exceptional infant who has never yet been stigmatized as the Old Baby.

I was born of the masculine gender, with a bald head, like Sir John Falstaff, and party-coloured, precisely three hundred and sixty-four days ago. To-morrow, at 4.30 in the morning, to an instant, I shall

have arrived at a year, if not of discretion, at least of human experience. I shall be "going on" for two years old. This consideration by no means intoxicates me with a boastful joy. To live, as I have already learned, alas! is but another name for to suffer. In this little span of life, what vicissitude of fortune have I even now endured! How Time's inevitable yoke has bowed my little neck and pressed my chin into my bib! I would that it had been permitted to me to remain for ever lobster-red, spotty, fishy-eyed, habitually or with the rarest exceptions naked, cross, smiling (with the wind, and not with joy), exclusively confined to a milk-diet—rather than have grown to what I have become. Where are the comforts of my youth?—the warm soft sponges which were wont to dab me daintily, the scented powders which were scattered over my then respected person, the bottles with soothing liquids that welled through the softest channels to my toothless but far from unappreciating gums. "Whither are they fled, the glory and the dream?" Where are now the gorgeous habiliments in which, upon festive days, I was then arrayed?—the Brussels lace, the bishop's lawn, the lily train which kept my baby legs so delicately snug, so decently concealed, the embroidered cap, the endless folds of flannel? Where are the troops of young-lady friends who were once so eager to dandle, to caress me, to lay their

soft fair cheeks to mine as they replaced me in my couch after those endearments? Did I sob?—they kissed me; did I yell?—and I did hollo a bit sometimes, I flatter myself—they kissed me; did I crow?—which was my infant method of expressing satisfaction—they kissed me all the same. My career was, in a word, voluptuous, but, alas! it was but brief. Another reigneth in my stead, and I am denominated now, with bitter disrespect, the Old Baby. The late lord mayor, sunk to a nameless alderman; the ex-minister of state, with nothing to give, and despised by every patriot; the last year's *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*; the shoes which one has grown out of, and that through the upper leathers; the type of all things that have seen their day, and will never see another—the Old Baby!


Is it, then, a sin to be old? Is it wrong to have hair, to be of a flesh-colour, to cease to stare like a stuffed fish, to devote the hours of the night to sleep, and not to gormandizing? If not—since in these respects alone have I offended—why have I thus been punished? I am no longer the idol of my once doting mother, the pride of my father, the boast of my nurse.

The conversation which is now addressed to me ceases to be distinguished by those endearing epithets

with which it was so liberally garnished, and is no longer studiously couched in terms supposed to be especially suitable to the infant ear:

“Darling, warling; did it dribble then? Dribbley ibbley, dribbley ibbley, dribbley ibbley: tum and look out at the window pindow, and see the red soldiers go by on their gee-gees: ook at the gee-gees! *Did* they frighten it? [pathetically.] *Was* it then? Naughty soldiers, naughty paughty; they shall be popped [with vivacity], popped, popped. Was he hungry, and would he have his dindin [two courses of milk, over the second of which I used to get uncommonly drowsy]; dindin, dindin [singing], wrap him in a rabbit-skin; baby go to byby, byby, byby.”

Thus was I wont to be apostrophized in my earlier days. Gorgeous spectacles, always of a novel character, were perpetually being submitted to my notice; food was administered to me, if I did but open my mouth; sleep stole upon me, to the accompaniment of slow music and soft Lydian (or other) airs, and, in particular, with a delicious sideways motion which I now miss extremely. It is remarkable how, as we grow older, we lose not only the pleasures themselves, the innocent pleasures of our youth, but even the capacity for enjoying them. It is sad to reflect, for instance, that that rocking of the human frame, which to the tune of “Hushy pushy, Baby Bunting,” was



once so soothing to it, produces, when attempted at a later period, a feeling akin to sea-sickness!

The same venerable female visitors who were wont to call so often about luncheon-time, and for whose reception I was at once equipped in my most splendid attire, call now—but it is to see the Other, the new arrival; a most grasping and pugnacious babe, with no nose at all, so far as I can see, and a face, indeed, altogether, which, if it were mine, I should be downright ashamed to let people look at. And yet to hear them talk!

“Oh, what a bew-w-tiful baby! What a charming baby! Only six weeks old! Is it possible, nurse? What notice it takes! [This is when it shrieks with terror and bad temper.] What an eye it has! [This is very true; its left eye is always at the western angle of the lid, trying, as it seems to me, to discover a passage under its blob of a nose, by which it may join the other one.] What a duck of a mouth! [It’s much more like an oyster.] I suppose its nose will get all right in time. [Ha, ha!] It’s rather small at present, is it not? [Rather.] What a chin! [They might just as well say: ‘What a couple of chins!’ for there are two of them. One of the foolish women perhaps lays down her parasol, and offers to take up the little wretch, who resists fran-


tically.] Won't it come to its ——? Never mind, then, my loveliest one! [Oh, to see its wrinkled, crabbed, screaming, variegated countenance, at the moment when this epithet is conferred upon it!] Frightened at the bonnetty ponnetty, was it not? *Now* then; now she has taken her bonnet off, now it will come to its Margery Pargery! Lor bless me, nurse; if it does not think that I am its mamma! Now, isn't that strange?" And if the reader could see Miss Margaret Crabapple, he would think it strange too. It may require some wisdom in a child to know its own father; but not to know one's own mother is, in my humble opinion, little short of idiotic. Yet I remember when I was young myself—that is to say, younger—Uncle George's playing off a trick upon mamma, the humour of which I was at that time unable to appreciate. My dear mother was for ever vowing—for ever, that is, until within the last two months—that I was the most extraordinary infant that had come into the world from the earliest times unto the present, and that there could never be such another in the revolving ages that were to come, and for ever boasting, in particular, of how she should be able, on account of my distinguished appearance, to pick me out from among a hundred others at a baby-show. Now, this latter assertion Uncle George denied; and in order to prove himself in the right, he hit upon this device. Upon

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my being taken out for a constitutional upon a certain morning, he caused me to be equipped in an entirely new suit of raiment, secretly procured at his own expense, and then to be brought back again to my mother in some quarter of an hour's time by the nursemaid of Mrs. Brown, our neighbour (who had been herself confined almost simultaneously), in the character of *her* son Undecimus Brown. Poor dear mamma fell into the snare at once. She allowed that I was a fine enough child, a more than averagely respectable baby, but still that there was a something wanting, she couldn't say what, which her particular offspring possessed in an uncommon degree. I did not seem, somehow, *quite* so intelligent, *quite* so clear complexioned, *quite* so sweet tempered. No, it was not her fancy; there was a marked difference: there was a certain flabbiness about my flesh, and a lack of that healthy firmness about the calves, which was indeed a peculiar and touching *spécialité* about her own darling son. When Uncle George burst out laughing, and disclosed the trick, it was Falstaff and Prince Hal in "Henry IV." again, and "The Devil to Pay" as well. My mother insisted upon it that she had known it all along. What an absurd idea that she, a mother, should not know her own dear darling child! What a cruel and unnatural uncle the man must be who could thus trifle with the tenderest feel-

ings of our nature! and then hysterics and the governor sent for, and a regular scene.

My uncle is a bachelor, and did not understand that women will bear anything better than a practical joke. *I* never was deceived, mind. Even at that period, when I was, of course, comparatively without experience, it was not easy to take *me* in. But what is the use of intellect to one in my present state? It would be far better for me, indeed, if I had a less keen appreciation of the position in which I now crawl. I use that expression advisedly; I cannot stand yet, even when holding on to the chairs by the tips of my small fingers. This is, however, the accomplishment to attain which I am directing all my infant energies. I find that crawling brings me into currents of cold air from under doors and elsewhere, and that a higher elevation would partly obviate this; besides which, I am apt to get trodden upon, and when I utter my indignant protest against such conduct, the iron of that sarcasm, long since rusted with my tears, is driven into my infant spirit by the remark: "Oh, never mind; it's only the Old Baby!" It will scarcely be credited, perhaps, that the principal staple of my present nutriment consists of gravy, saved—that is to say, left—from the mutton or beef of the family dinner of the preceding day, mingled with crumbs of bread swept off on the same occasion from the table-



cloth—leavings, offal, garbage, in fact, that is my daily food!

I have seen with my own eyes the Other going out for her perambulation in her perambulator (once my property), attired in my private embroidered pelisse, and sheltered under my particular umbrella from the rays of the sun. *My* complexion is now of no sort of consequence. I may get black and tan—I'd rather be *that* than red and yellow as the Other is—for all they care, and be exhibited to the public in a cotton dress without the least ornament of fancy. Deprivation of necessary milk-diet, neglect, and robbery, are the three simple charges which I have to make against the members of my family and household. Also, inhumanity in short-coating me before my time, through which I have suffered severely in my extremities from the late east winds. Also, and lastly, cruelty in not providing me with anything to sit upon, or, more correctly, with any place where I can sit with comfort and satisfaction, now that there is no more room for me upon my nurse's knee. That generation after generation should "push us from our stools," as each grows old, is, as the poet has told us, an event to be expected; but to be pushed about from one article of furniture to another, disrowned, throneless, a very Lear of the nursery, is, I think, rather hard upon a superannuated infant. At present, my existence may

be said to be, like an approaching marriage in high life, upon the *tapis*, or Kidderminster only, from which nobody, save Uncle George, ever takes the trouble to pick me up. In a word, out of revenge, I suppose, for having exceedingly little of that feature himself to boast of, the Other has put my nose out of joint. I'm the Old Baby.

TOO LATE.

It is recorded of the late Mr. Leigh Hunt that his procrastination was so excessive that he could never trust himself to rise in time to leave home and take the coach, but was obliged to engage a bed overnight at the inn from which it started. He was a punctual man, however, compared to *me*. I could never make certain of being a passenger unless I slept in the coach itself. The nicety affected by these vehicles in the matter of time (and particularly if they carried the mail-bags) was simply ridiculous. They would not, I believe, have waited for King George in person, although they carried his very arms upon their sides. How often have I had to engage post-horses at a ruinous expense to overtake those implacable machines! How often have I entered them at the very moment of departure with my waistcoat unbuttoned and my coat and top-boots in my hand! How often have I toiled after their revolving wheels, making fruitless signals of distress, and with my cries for succour drowned in the "tooting" of the relentless horn!

I am quite unable to account for the excessive value—the Fancy Price—that is set so generally upon the article Time. I do not ask, in vulgar ridicule, “What does it matter a hundred years hence?” but “What does it matter *to-morrow* whether we start to-day at a quarter or at half-past two?” The modern expressions 2.15 and 2.30 have such an objectionable accuracy about them that I never use them. I have seen a limited night-mail advertised to arrive at a certain station at 3.48 a.m. Now, only conceive the affectation of such a number of minutes as that at a time of day when the very latest have retired to their couches, and the very earliest are not out of bed! A quarter of an hour either way, they tell me, might produce endless disaster—Up-express into Meat-train, or Fish-train into Parliamentary—to which I reply that if so, the system must be faulty. “The day,” observes a well-known poet, “was made for vulgar souls, the night was made for you and me;” and without necessarily assenting to the bard’s particular apportionment, we may say generally that the Day and Night—that is to say, *Time*—was made for the whole human family, and *not* the whole human family (as one would imagine from their behaviour) for Time.

“It is the early bird,” observed the late Jemmy Wood, of Gloucester, to his apprentice lad, “that gets *the first worm.*”

"True," returned the boy, "but it must be the early worm that gets eaten."

For this epigram (which was a better thing than his master ever said in his life), the poor young fellow was punished—docked, very likely, of a penny out of the sixpence that constituted his weekly wage. He had, indeed, indirectly made a joke upon Time, but "I have yet to learn," as indignant tradespeople observe in local newspapers, that to do that is to commit a blasphemy. What is Time, forsooth, that nobody may poke fun at him! It is my opinion that a Gentleman (for he is *that*, I'll allow) who is understood to go about the world insufficiently clothed, and with an hour-glass and scythe, instead of gloves and an umbrella, is an object of satire rather than reverence. He is old enough, it is true—old enough to know better, I should have thought—but really, from the slavish respect that some people pay to Time, one would suppose he was Eternity. The honest, plain-spoken truth is never written about him except upon Tombstones. *There*, indeed, he is only named to be derided, and Time used means Time abused. "Time is nought—Time is finished up—Time is Thistle-down." "Phew, and he's gone"—with many other remarks of a similar depreciatory character. I have even seen infamous caricatures of him upon more than one mausoleum, lying upon his back with his hour-glass broken, and his scythe rusted, as though it

had been all over with him, and nobody cared; but defiances of this kind have never been able to gain my approval. It is only deceased persons whose connection with him has ceased that venture to take these liberties with Time. They have loaded pistols (as Dr. Johnson says with reference to a different matter) which they dare not fire off themselves, but leave some beggarly fellow a few shillings to pull the trigger after their death.

Some very severe things are also occasionally uttered against Time by clergymen in their sermons; concerning his vanity (which, if he piques himself upon his personal appearance, must be monstrous indeed), his profligate waste, and the worthless yet deceptive character of his ordinary occupations; but when these gentlemen leave their pulpits, they are just as sycophantic in their behaviour to him as any other class of people. I particularly remember that the master of my first school was a clergyman, and exceedingly subservient to Time. If one happened to be a minute or two late in the morning, or for dinner, or for afternoon study, or even for bed (which at that period was entirely my own affair), this man would even proceed to acts of violence. I have known him cane a boy—I am not taking a merely supposititious case, because it happened to myself—I have known him, I say, to strike a fellow-creature several times (*and behind, too, the coward!*) because the victim had

omitted to return from a country ramble in time to take part in a Greek play. Now, this, mind, was not any case analogous to Private Theatricals, where, if you are not ready to sustain your character when the performance comes off, somebody else has to *read* your part, and the audience is dissatisfied, and the stage-manager wild—a misfortune of which I myself have been more than once the innocent cause; but in a Greek play *everybody* reads his part (if he can), and a single person is sufficient to constitute the Chorus.

At the University, too, where the educational system is almost entirely in clerical hands, the same inordinate respect is paid to Time, which, it is contended, has hallowed its precincts and solidified its institutions. In a place, indeed, for which Time has done so very much, even to the exclusion, as some people say, of other improving causes, one cannot wonder that it is held in some sort of reverence; yet what can excuse a superstition so gross that it was actually the cause of my losing £2,000 a year, as well as an excellent dwelling-house? The calamity took place in this manner. Upon the morning of my first day's examination for honours (in which I had intended to have taken the highest place) I overslept myself, and was refused permission to make matters straight by a couple of hours' work in the evening. The immediate consequence of this was that I only obtained an ordinary degree, and the final result that I lost my chance of a

HOLIDAY TASKS.

ship (£250 per annum), of a tutorship (£150), eventually of the mastership of my college, with £100 a year and the Lodge, to which, like the Inland Revenue, I might, if I pleased, have invited a wife. However, if I have suffered a loss, so also has the college: if it had been fortunate enough to have secured me as its chief, I should have earned the blessings of unborn generations of its undergraduates. No chapel-warden should have closed with a snap to exclude the late-surprised penitent, as he flew to overtake the minute hand and a half lost in looking for his pocket-handkerchief! No Dean should have frowned reproach because a young man's hunting-watch happened to be a quarter of an hour behind the college clock! No grave question of rustication should have arisen out of the confusion of one small hour with another after midnight! Alma Mater, however, has lost her opportunity, and must get on, orphaned of the present writer, as best she can.

I suppose I have had more doors slammed in my face by Railway officials than any man alive, with accompanying words: "Too late, sir; the bell has rung and the train is on the move." *On the move!* not monstrous that an individual who talks such rubbish as that should have power to bar the passage of a man like me? But the being too late for that is not the greatest inconvenience that happens to me; I have also a peculiar faculty for being carried

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station at which I have intended to get out. I have in this manner had the opportunity of seeing many remarkable spots which would otherwise have escaped me, and seeing them, as it has generally happened, with plenty of time to spare. On the other hand, to avoid increasing my distance beyond the place already overshot, I have sometimes got out at solitary stations untrodden by foot of ordinary passenger, and only erected, as it would seem, for the benefit of such waifs and strays as myself. I have been disembarked from a coast-line upon a spit of land with "water, water everywhere," and not a drop to mix with it, at which, as I subsequently discovered, the train only called on Fridays, in the desperate hope, I suppose, of picking up on that unlucky day a shipwrecked crew; and I have been set down within the limits of a Druidical circle upon an apparently boundless plain. Once only had I a companion in misfortune in a certain barrister who was going down to defend some burglars in the Black Country, and was carried with me past the assize town, and "shunted" off to an obscure locality, which was not so much a station as a coke depôt.

"Why did you not inform us that we should have to change when we stopped at the Junction?" inquired my legal acquaintance of the terrified guard. "Your conduct, sir, is not only scandalous but actionable, and the Company must make good the pecuniary loss incurred by myself and friend through the delay."

I was going to visit an old college friend who happened to be on the grand jury, and all that I was likely to lose by the mistake was a good dinner; but I endeavoured to look becomingly indignant like a man who was quite unused to such misfortunes, and observed that the official's conduct was alike reprehensible and unparalleled. Unfortunately, however, for our chance of living the remainder of our days in affluence at the expense of the Great West Coast Line, the guard chanced to put his head into the carriage we had just quitted, after which his tone changed at once from the conciliatory to the defiant. "It sarves you nothing more than right," cried he, "for actin' in contempt of the by-laws. If you had not been smokin' with the winders up, you'd a heerd me easy enough when I hollered out your station. And now you'll have to stay here seven hours, and you ought to be thankful as there is no magistrate in the neighbourhood to fine you forty shillings."

There was certainly no magistrate, nor, as I should think, from what came to pass, so much as a police-constable, within many miles of that coke depôt. There was not an individual to be seen, although the country round was totally destitute of anything like a tree to obscure him. The whole population lived underground, and only came out upon the surface of the earth at night—like the blackbeetles. The landscape *was covered*, to the depth of three or four inches, with

coal-shale, and looked like some mighty fireplace which the housemaid had forgotten to set in order that morning. The attractions toward a country walk were also diminished by the circumstance of incessant rain. When we had finished sending off our respective telegraphic messages to account to our friends for our non-appearance, the resources of the place in the way of amusement seemed to be exhausted. The refreshment-room, a dingy den, profusely decorated with clay-pipes and pewter-pots, was deficient in literature; its available library consisted of a book of advertisements—a *Railway Album*, it was called—and a Time-Table; there was an *Illustrated News* of the week-before-last “somewheres,” we were told, but it was not recovered during our stay. The barrister and I played draughts—a game which I had not attempted for forty years, but which had been familiar to me in early childhood—from three o’clock to seven, after which we began to feel a little tired: at that hour, however, the room became suddenly inundated with miners, who compelled us to play on for their own amusement. It was but seldom, they said, that clever chaps like us favoured that part of the country with their presence, but when they did they always gave an entertainment—conjuring, political lectures, revivals, fireworks, or what not. If we had no other gift, we must play draughts, or else, they hinted, it might be very much the worse for us. So the company surrounded us, and

wagered upon our respective skill, with many singular expressions and imprecations; and I do believe that my companion's life would have been sacrificed to his backers had I not yielded to his earnest entreaties (couched in the French language), and permitted him to win a game or two for pity's sake. We parted, however, from our underground friends in great amity, and were accompanied to the train by the whole sable crowd. I have no doubt but that we were taken by the astonished passengers for the principals of a prize-fight.

But the most interesting and, alas! the most fatal of my mishaps, arising from inattention to the lapse of time, took place upon the morning of what was to have been my wedding-day. My Clementina was (unhappily, as it turned out) an inhabitant of Hampton, a locality justly celebrated for its races, its picture-galleries, its park, and its Maze. Ah me! what pleasant hours have I passed upon the waters of Thames, with one arm directing the tiller-ropes, and the other round the beloved object, while the waterman, accustomed to such endearments, rowed skilfully and imperturbably on! What prodigies of valour did I once perform to save her from an irritated swan, who made at her from an osier-bed (where, I suppose, its cygnets lay) as though she had been another Leda! How often have I compared her features with those of the beauties of the court of Charles II. as we wandered through

the cool and shady galleries of the palace ! There was at that time scarcely a tree in Bushey Park whose leaves had not some loving memorial to whisper of my Clementina, who, careless alike of insects and the rheumatics, delighted to sit, and especially to picnic, beneath their spreading branches. The one thing that seemed to bespeak my Clementina human rather than angelic, to assure me that she was not altogether too bright and good for such an individual as myself, was that she was oppressively punctual. She liked her luncheon to the minute, and her dinner likewise. When I chanced, on my daily return from town, to miss a train (which did not happen, I am sure, more than twice or three times a week), she would meet me with a pout that was delicious as a temporary infirmity readily yielding to emollients, but which I sometimes used to fear might become chronic. She got up also, without the aid of an alarum, desperately early in the morning, and was always declaiming about the beauties of the opening day. The sluggard, she said, with meaning, could never know how beautiful nature really was. To be truly happy, it was necessary to be out before breakfast, and sip the morning dew. Just as if the evening dew was not drawn from the very same tap. My Clementina was charming, of course, even upon this disputed point of Time, but she was also a little alarming. Her very last words on the evening previous to the day which was to have

made us one at 11 a.m. at Hampton Church were these: "Now, mind, Augustus, and be sure not to be too late, or I will never forgive you."

"Too late for *thee*?" I rejoined. "No, indeed, sweetheart! If I am not at the altar before the clock strikes, let it be a sign that I love thee not." To which she answered: "Be it so." And we laughed together at that ridiculous notion, as we bade one another "Good-night" as softly as the cooing of the cushat.

Too late? Why, I got up that morning with the lark—if at least that bird of song rises a little after eight—and after breakfast strolled into the quiet Court Gardens. Not a human being was there to interrupt the dream of bliss that floated through my soul, and, indeed, after a little while it got to be tedious. There was still an hour before I could make my appearance at the church without any exhibition of indecorous impatience, and I thought I would spend it in the Maze. The keeper or exhibitor of that Rosamond's Bower was as delighted to see me wending towards that labyrinth as spider to welcome fly, for the time was as yet early for pleasure-seekers. He observed, however, that it was just then his hour for "nuncheon"—having taken his breakfast in the dark, I suppose—after which refreshment he would be delighted to guide my wanderings.

"No," said I; "I have no time for that, my friend.

Guide me first, and you shall have your nuncheon afterwards; and here's half a crown to enable you to make it a better one."

The official took the coin, and after turning it over twice in his hand, and putting it between his teeth, to make sure that it was genuine, expressed his cordial thanks; then, mounting the platform from which he is wont to give directions to those within his toils, he signed to me to enter the bower.

It was deep summer-time, and the green walls of the labyrinth rose lofty and full-foliaged, so that only now and then could I catch sight of my mentor and his official pole: I had therefore to trust mainly to his verbal directions, wherein, so contradictory and objectless did they sometimes appear, that I cannot help thinking he must have made occasional mistakes, to the extent at least of saying "Right" when he meant "Left," and *vice versa*. When I arrived at last in the very heart of the place, I was glad enough to sit down and take breath upon the bench provided there for successful travellers. I had hardly taken my seat, however, when I heard Hampton Church clock strike a quarter past ten; and although I had plenty of time to spare yet, it made me nervous.

"Now, guide," cried I, "I am quite ready; please to take me out again, for it's later than I thought."

The echo from the distant palace-wall replied, or

seemed to reply, "Caught!" but there was no other answer whatsoever.

"Guide," repeated I, jumping up alarmed, "play me no tricks, I beg. I want to be *off!*" I screamed. "My Clementina will be *left in the church!*"

And the echo answered, "Left in the church, or lurch;" for the guide was gone.

The half-crown paid beforehand had been too much for his principles, and he had hurried away to drink it with his "nuncheon." How long, I wondered, would it take a man to finish half a crown's worth of his favourite liquor! He would probably dilute it with water, and spin it out with police reports and gossip. Finally, he would get intoxicated, and forget that there was an unhappy wretch in his Maze at all. The perspiration gathered on my brow as I thought of my parting words with Clementina: "If I am not at the altar before thee, let it be a sign that I love thee not;" and I knew her too well to doubt that she would stick to her own part of the bargain: "Be it so." Then a sudden recollection struck upon my brain that to get out of a Maze, you had only persistently to keep to one hand—the left, for instance; and I started off at once upon this scientific principle. The result was, that after three-quarters of an hour's hard walking, I found myself once more at the bench from which I started—in the very centre of the abominable *labyrinthine* system.

"Why did he not get over?" inquires some indignant lady-reader.

Madam, with all respect, and setting your petticoats aside, I should like to have seen you at it yourself. A Maze in July is simply a succession of "bull-finchers"—a thirtyfold girdle of utterly impracticable hedges—not strong enough to bear one, and not thin enough to permit of one's plunging through. As a delicate-winged bird will fly against wire and wood upon first finding itself imprisoned, so did I adventure to attack the Maze in my marriage garb; but in attempting the very first leafy barrier, such a terrible accident happened to my "connubial does" as at once put an end to any notion of my presenting myself at the altar in them at all. If the faithless Guide had made his appearance upon that instant, and had been the deftest and most willing tailor, carrying needle and thread about with him in readiness for such a contingency, I do not believe that I could have reached Hampton Church presentably at the appointed time. That question, however, need not be debated here, for he never appeared at all. Rendered frantic by my misfortunes, and conscious that worse could not happen to me, I tore through the massive hedges like a gorilla in his native woods, and after the second or third, with very little more than a gorilla in the way of clothes to impede my headlong course. I have heard, and I sincerely trust the report is correct, that I

spoiled that celebrated Maze for the remainder of the season; but the victory was not achieved without a frightful loss. The most hideous part of the whole proceeding was that the bells—my own marriage-bells—rang merrily throughout the contest, and turned my blood to gall whenever, impaled upon some hedge more spikey than common, I was temporarily forced to listen to them.

“Too late, too late, too late again,
No Clementina, none,”

was what they pealed, or seemed to peal, incessantly. And all that time she was waiting at the church, and ready to affirm that she was “not afraid with any amazement”—a curious expression, which seems to have had a peculiar significance in my own case. It is needless to say I lost her. I cannot say the loss was irreparable, because I have long been wedded to another, and she mightn’t like it; but at the time it was very severe. It taught me a lesson against being “too late” (in general), which I forgot at supper-time the same evening; and one against entering a Maze when one has only half an hour to spare (in particular), which I shall never forget as long as I live.

TOO SOON.

I AM a female, Mr. Editor, and therefore the weapon which I am most accustomed to wield is not the pen. If I could get you by the button, or within reach of my voice, I do not doubt but that I should convince you of what I wish; but I find a difficulty in procuring a personal interview. The only time that I did have an opportunity of seeing you, you were particularly engaged—if you remember—and I was unable to conclude the manuscript which I was doing myself the pleasure of reading to you aloud. Since then, whenever I have called at your office, it has always happened that you have “just left, and are not expected to be there again for the remainder of the day.” I should have otherwise much preferred communicating to you my views upon the following subject *vivâ voce*, and leaving you to embody them in your own columns. Redress and sympathy are all that I am in search of. Fame, goodness knows, is not my object; the rejection of that manuscript, written by my eldest daughter, aged fourteen only—and *very much* improving, permit me to add, after the seven-

teenth chapter, at which introductory period of the tale we were so unfortunately interrupted—the rejection of that manuscript wounded my Arabella's soul as with a barbed arrow; but for my own part, I was glad of it. I do not wish her to set foot too early upon the thorny path of literary distinction.

"Tompkins," said I to her father, "I am honestly glad of it. Our Arabella will meet with the world's incense and adulation soon enough. That girl, mark me, is the child of genius."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself to tell me so," responded Tompkins, laughing; but what he meant by that I have not the least idea. He often laughs in rather a foolish manner when, so far as I can see, there is little or nothing to laugh at.

Where was I, Mr. Editor? I should not have called upon you, I was about to say, a *second* time upon any matter that only concerned myself or my belongings. No, sir; my business referred to an article recently published in your own columns, and for which I therefore conclude you are in some degree responsible. In that paper—entitled "Too Late"—a certain mischievous idea is indirectly inculcated. Its author would appear to be one of those joking persons, whom, although popular in certain society, I cannot say, for my own part, that I at all admire. Tompkins is always expressing his admiration for *what he calls* "humour." Well, I happened to have

taken an opportunity of looking out that word in the dictionary, and I find it thus described—"a fluid in its morbid or vitiated state." A man of humour is therefore a person who had much better betake himself to some cold-water cure establishment than go about infecting society, for I have heard Tompkins confess that humour *is* infectious. Under the mask of the jester, then, the writer of the paper to which I refer has chosen to bepraise punctuality, as though mankind were not already slaves enough to that degrading principle. Permit me to say a word or two upon the other side of the question—against being "Too Soon."

This is a social error, to which Tompkins is dreadfully addicted. I would solemnly warn all women about to marry to ascertain beforehand that their contemplated husband is not what is called a fidget. A leaning towards intemperance may be greatly mitigated in a husband by one's keeping the cellar key, and not allowing him any pocket-money; but a fanaticism for being always before the time, it is difficult to repress, and impossible to extirpate. Better that a bridegroom should not be at the church-door until after the rubrical hour, and your marriage be postponed for a day, than that he should prove himself a fidget by presenting himself at the altar before the clergyman or yourself is ready for him. Your self-love may suggest that such haste is only the result of

his eager devotion; but do not deceive yourselves, young women—he would have been at the church equally early if it had been to bury you. Tompkins himself is in many respects an excellent husband, and I do believe is very fond of me; but it is timeliness first, and feelings afterwards with him, I know. When business calls him on a journey, only one eye drops a tear at parting with his wife and offspring; the other is fixed upon the clock, to see that the cab is sent for in time to catch the train. That “catching the train” is the thought which makes him thin and keeps him so. Much of his time is of necessity consumed in travelling, but not nearly so much as he spends in preparation for his journeys. The day previous to an expedition is mainly occupied in packing his carpet-bag and writing out his direction labels. He leaves overnight, as in a will, the most elaborate directions for the proceedings of the next morning, with a codicil, appointing that he shall be called half an hour earlier than he at first considered soon enough. This last command is wholly superfluous, since he always wakes of himself long before the appointed hour, and proceeds to ring the house up. Previous to this, he has kept me from my rest since earliest dawn, by perpetually getting out of bed to see whether it is going to be fine. Upon this depends the momentous question: Shall he take his waterproof-coat or not? *If he does*, it should be strapped up at once with the

other things already lying on the hall-table ready for departure—not a moment is to be lost. His toilet is hasty enough, but not speedy; for in his eager desire on retiring to rest to have everything ready for the morning, he has generally packed up his brushes and comb, or some other indispensable thing which has to be disinterred from the portmanteau. He generally shaves overnight; but if not, I tremble for his throat, since I know with what imprudent rapidity he is performing that operation in his dressing-room.

“Georgina, my darling, *sticking-plaster!* There is not an instant to lose,” is the cry I listen for; and although I am pretty sure it only refers to his being behindhand, and not to a frightful hemorrhage demanding an immediate styptic, one really needs to have nerves of iron.

Presently his door opens, and I hear his voice over the banisters: “Jane, my *boots!* Where are my *boots?* What? No, they’re not in my room; they’re nothing of the kind. Ask Susan. Confound that girl, why is she always taking my boots away? She’s like a magpie. Where are my *boots?*”

After the one domestic has solemnly declared her innocence of this abduction, and the other has called witnesses to prove that she took master’s boots up, cleaned, the night before, according to orders, in order to save time in the morning, I hear Tompkins observe in a very conciliatory tone that they need

never mind, for that it doesn't matter—the fact being that he has actually had the articles in question on his feet during the whole of the altercation. He had thought it would hasten matters to put them on at once instead of his slippers, and then forgot that he had done so. But “Jane,” adds he, “tell cook that I'm ready for breakfast. Isn't the breakfast ready? It *ought* to be; yes, it ought. I tell you that kitchen clock is slow—it's very slow.”

I do not generally descend myself on these occasions, so that I cannot say what actually takes place at Tompkins's breakfast; but I know it is a very hurried one, and, like a Chinese religious ceremony, accompanied by a continuous ringing of bells. All this is of course not punctuality; but what is it? The English language (being framed by the male) has plenty of such terms as dawdle and dilatory, but no expression for a by no means uncommon vice which is not only bad in itself, but ensnaring to others. Let me call it, then, “Too-soon-ism.” This is, it seems, a hereditary malady. Tompkins's father was afflicted with it; and, moreover, his mother presented him to the world several weeks before his advent was expected. It is no wonder, then, and scarcely blame to him, that Too-soon-ism influences my unhappy husband in this manner; but it is a serious calamity to me. My very amusements are embittered to me by *reason of the hurry* that accompanies them. Tomp-

kins and I are always the first people within the walls of the theatre as soon as the doors are open, and it is not unusual for us to arrive before they *are* open. Then we have to sit in our brougham gorgeously apparelled, while the sharp and wicked street-boys speculate maliciously upon the bird from which my ostrich feather was taken, or as to whether the carriage is our own, or a hired vehicle.

I suppose I have heard more twanging of fiddles and tooting of flutes than any woman alive. It is one thing to be in time for the overture, but it is quite another to come in for the tuning of the orchestra. On the other hand, there is nobody who has had less opportunity than myself of listening to the sublime strains of the national anthem. Long before the conclusion of the piece, Tompkins is fidgeting to be away, in order that we may have "the carriage brought up at once," or because "to-morrow is Sunday, my love, remember;" or because to-morrow is not Sunday, and he has to be up preternaturally early, in order to be at some office in the city—at 11. I protest that, often as I have seen "Don Giovanni," I have never yet beheld the ghost-scene; and though I have watched Queen Katharine sink to sleep at the conclusion of "Henry VIII.," I have never yet had the pleasure of seeing her celebrated dream. As soon as the "slow music, lights half down," commences, and the white feet of the foremost angel begin to slide down from

the theatrical heaven, Tompkins throws my shawl over my shoulders, and offers me his arm with an *empressment* that would be flattering indeed if it were caused by anything but the fidgets.


Similarly, it is not, I fear, religious feeling which prompts him to arrive in church a quarter of an hour before the earliest of the congregation make their appearance, for otherwise he would not be rubbing his hat round with his pocket-handkerchief, and whispering: "Now, my love, are you ready," while the clergyman is saying the benediction. Too-soon-ism in a place of worship is not indeed conducive to devotion. The plethoric beadle, who will not venture to yawn for the next two hours, opens his mouth wide enough when Tompkins and myself are the only spectators; while the pew-openers, who are all piety and curtsies when the proper time arrives, do not deny themselves, on account of our untimely presence, the interchange of parochial gossip. In this manner I have become involuntarily possessed of the knowledge of which of our neighbours have not paid for their pew-rents this six months, "no, nor means to pay 'em;" of which are - greedy after hassocks; and of which are "as mean as mean can be, and would as soon think of giving a Christmas-box, let alone a Heaster hofferin', to a poor ooman, bless ye, as of standing on their 'eads in that there pulpit."

Similarly, at the theatre, I have overheard the

third Flute confide to the second Bassoon his opinion upon the merits of the manager, not as respects his acting, but as to his inadequate remuneration of instrumental talent; and I have learned from the Big Drum's own lips what he was going to have for supper, and the honest reason (amply sufficient, though the supper was not) why he could not do himself the pleasure of asking the Cymbals thereto. Worst of all, I have often been an unwilling listener to the conversation of railway officials, who, while they dust the empty carriages, and replenish the grease boxes (in the intervals of more active business, while the station is a waste, and the ticket-office hermetically sealed), are accustomed to interchange communications concerning their "dreadful trade," which, although to themselves merely exciting, like the novel in their penny illustrated journals, have to the passenger that-is-about-to-be an interest very real and blood-chilling. They converse of the "narrow shave" by which the Parliamentary of yesterday afternoon was only just shunted in time at the junction, ere the down express whirled by, and of the admirable talent evinced by Jem the engine-driver, who, although habitually drunk, has never yet been "nailed at it," and "who sleeps as comfortable, between the stations, that he do, as though his *engine* was a first-class carriage. Lork-a-daisy, if the public only know'd" (I heard one man remark this to his fellows not a week ago) "what

precious risky things they have got to trust to, it's my belief we should have less old ladies with parrots and pug-dogs a-travelling by this here line for pleasure." Whereupon they all answered: "True enough, mate," and broke into fiendish laughter.

This is unpleasant, but it is one of the least evils of railway travel in Tompkins's company. If he is a fidget on his own account, you may imagine what a state he puts himself into when his wife and family have to start with him. He may well talk about "catching the train," for if the train were a species of animal only to be secured by excessive speed, he could scarcely excite us to more unreasonable exertions. He begins at goodness knows what hour in the morning. "Now, my love, it is time you were up, for only consider how long it takes you to dress.—*There's plenty of time.* Yes, that's what you said when we lost the last train from Brighton that night and forfeited our return-tickets." [He will never forget that unhappy incident as long as he lives.] "And, remember, you've got your dressing-case to pack. Arabella-a-a-a!" [This is addressed at the top of his voice to our unconscious daughter in the third-floor back.] "Are you getting ready, Arabella-a-a? No; you're not. I can hear by your tone that you are in bed. There's not half an hour to spare, I tell you, nor anything like it. Your back-hair never takes you *less than twenty minutes!* What! Then it isn't your

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own, I'm sure. You must pin it on behind, as I have always suspected you did. *Susan!* why isn't the water boiling? How am I to shave? Nurse, where are the children? I want to kiss the darling children." [This is false; Tompkins only wants to make sure that they are up and dressing.] "They had better have their bonnets on before breakfast, and then they will be ready to start at once."

"Tompkins," I exclaim, "your conduct is really disgraceful; holloaing out like that upon the landing, and you without your dressing-gown. I insist upon your putting on your dressing-gown."

"My love, it's packed up," he rejoins; "I packed it up overnight, to save time."

Everything that is done by Tompkins is to save time; and if Time is Money, as I have somewhere seen it stated, my husband deserves to be a very rich man indeed. But, in truth, so far from saving, he wastes time. An eighth part of his existence, or six whole years at the very least, for he is fifty next birthday—and looks older, on account of his wearing himself away so in this manner—have been wasted in waiting for omnibuses and trains, at the corners of the streets, or on railway platforms; vast clippings of Time, which he might have judiciously spent in eating his breakfasts with more regard to digestion, in finishing works of amusement or information which he has impatiently flung away; in devotional exercises (instead

of using very deprecatable language when matters do not happen quick enough to please him); and in letting his wife and family have a little peace. People cannot see it, I am thankful to say, on account of the crinoline, which makes us appear all of a size, but I am absolutely wasting away. If it is hard for a man to bear the "nagging" of a woman, which is, as one may say, his natural burden, how can a woman bear to be "nagged" at—an evil never contemplated by the sex. I am perfectly well aware that I dawdle a little; every female has a natural tendency so to do; to take a last look in the glass when she ought to be on her way downstairs; to add a postscript to her letter while the postman is emptying the box at the street-corner; to kiss the children a second time all round, while the cab is waiting, and there is not a moment to spare. It was never feminine to move quickly, and the garments of the present day have made it next kin to impossible. We are—I confess it—generally rather late. There is therefore a certain excuse for one's being hurried by Paterfamilias; but not for one's being deceived, Mr. Editor; that is the point which I wished to arrive at long ago, only it is so difficult to arrive at a point. Nothing, I say, can excuse Tompkins for putting the clocks on, or terrifying us with false alarms respecting the hour. Many a time when we have been going out to dinner, has *he put me* in such a tremble that I could scarcely do

my hair, by holloaing up the stairs that the brougham would be at the door in less than five minutes. Now, one cannot do one's hair (unless one has "the man" in—and Heaven knows I am always trying to save Tompkins's pocket whenever I can), in five minutes, nor even in fifteen. After all our haste, too, we generally arrive at our friend's a quarter of an hour before we are expected, and find nobody in the drawing-room to receive us. It is in vain that I tell Tompkins that 6.45 means 7 o'clock. When we send out our own invitations, it is with the greatest difficulty that I can prevent him from inserting the word "sharp"—than which I can conceive nothing more vulgar—immediately after the dinner-hour. He would never wait for anybody—"no, not for the Queen of Sheba," is his ridiculous expression—if he could have his way; and last week we were as nearly as possible sitting down to table without Mrs. de Slocoche, who is the daughter of a bishop, and whose husband will one day be a baronet. However, I did make a stand there. I only mention this to show the reckless audacity with which Too-soon-ism will actuate a man, and with that example, Mr. Editor, I have done.

P.S.—No, I haven't. How fortunate it was that my letter happened somehow to be late for the afternoon's post, so that I put it in my travelling-bag, and carried it down with me into the country, in case there might be anything to add. And there is. We arrived at the

departure station last evening under the usual circumstances—hurried, worried, flurried—and, as *I* thought, about three-quarters of an hour before it was necessary. Wonderful to relate, however, the train was at the platform, and we had only just time to bundle into it while Tompkins ran for the tickets. His language was something awful, and (as I could not help remarking) a very bad example for the dear children. “If it had not been for me, madam,” replied he, “we should not have gone to-night at all, and strong expressions are absolutely necessary to move you.” He was very angry—for I suppose he had never been only just in time in his life—and he pulled at the window-blind so violently that the thing came off in his hand. “What an infamous old carriage!” cried he; “what rotten furniture; what fusty, musty seats! How slowly we are going, too! Well, if this is express speed, I could run as fast. We shall never get to our journey’s end at the proper time, I know.”

“Well, really,” said I, “Tompkins, that is *not* your business. The railway company is responsible and not you. Put your legs up, and go to sleep, do. We do not stop again for an hour at least.”

Even while I was yet speaking, however, the train gave unequivocal symptoms of stopping there and then, at a miserably small station just out of town. Tompkins thrust his head and shoulders out of *window*.

"What is the matter, guard? Why are we stopping here in this disgraceful manner?"

"There is nothing the matter, sir," was the reply. "We are stopping here because we are advertised to do so at every station."

"*At every station?*" exclaimed my husband, as white as a skinned walnut. "Isn't this the express, then?"

"No, sir; it's the parliamentary. The express don't start for half an hour yet. *We are shunted at the Junction presently, to let it go by.*—Yes, ma'am, the carriage *is* a little out of repair. We ain't so particklar, you see, with the first-class carriages in a train like this. Nobody ever gets into them except just from one station to the next or so. We shan't be at your station, ma'am, before daylight, if so soon."

I did not reproach Tompkins, because I saw he was in a state of mental collapse. He knew as well as I that his Too-soon-ism had put us into the wrong train, and would cause us to pass the dreary night upon the railway. I forbore to utter a word of complaint even when, shortly after, we were backed on to a siding like any goods train, and saw the express flash by like a meteor; that express which ought to have carried us to the arms of expectant friends, upon whom we should now break in like burglars between three and four A.M. I was silent at that time, I repeat, and have been so ever since; only I think the

more: and if ever again Tompkins exclaims, "There is no time to spare; make haste, or we shall never catch the train;" or if ever again he ventures to allude to that unhappy occasion at Brighton, when we forfeited our return-tickets, then, I say, I shall have an answer for him.

NATURE'S DUPLICATES.

NATURE has the credit of a good many things, and amongst others of variety. There are no two *Hemiptera* absolutely alike, we are told. This may or may not be true, although I must say that whenever I have been brought into contact with them, the result has been uniformly the same. But with regard to the larger living creatures, I protest against this flattery of the Universal Mother. She is *not* so altogether original in her creations. It is very likely that she may have been at one time; but like a popular author for whose works the demand is greater than the supply, she now habitually repeats herself. Adam had doubtless considerable individuality; so had Cain—who had, indeed, too much of the egotist in his character; Mr. William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was no copy. The Siamese Twins, again, did nature so much credit that people called them *unnatural*—a very left-handed compliment to her versatility. Miss Biffin, on the other hand, who had neither arms nor legs, attracted undue admiration: it is very easy to be original by leaving out something. I might write a novel—and in these

sensational days I think it would be likely to be a success—wherein the heroine should have but one eye; but I should not lay claim to the title of an original writer upon that account. If I placed that eye in the middle of her forehead, it would indeed be a very striking conception; but even then some of the reviewers know enough of the ancient classics to remember the Cyclops, and would reasonably accuse me of plagiarism. The first bear was doubtless an engaging beast. There was waggish humour in that oscillation of his head, and in the habit he had of putting his claw into his mouth, and pretending that he had the toothache; but the last bear, or nearly so, in the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, is rather a bore than a bear. One wearies of these things in four thousand years. The monotony of the leopard has been the subject of satirical observation for many centuries; Dr. Jenner himself could not have saved him from a single spot, or persuaded Nature to alter its position. The fox, with all his cunning, has not yet induced her so much as to mitigate his peculiar aroma: it is probable that he was just as offensive when shut up in the Ark as he is to-day, and would have killed the poultry there if he could have got at them, just as readily, notwithstanding that there were but a couple of fowls in all the world.

Alteration in the appearance or characteristics of *animals* is perhaps something more than should be

expected, but I think I have a right to complain when Nature borrows from her brute creation to lend to the human. Now, this she has been doing—I do not say at all times, yet not only so far back as my own experience goes, but since the existence of painting and sculpture. I observe in monuments of ancient art the most unmistakable likenesses between my fellow-creatures and animals of all sorts; while, when I walk abroad, the resemblance is so striking that I cannot help believing there is something credible in the theory of the Transmigration of Souls. When I say “abroad,” I mean in the streets at home; for on the continent, and especially in France, Man is fast disappearing altogether, and giving place to the Anthropoid Ape. I travelled from the seaside to the City yesterday morning in a railway-carriage that was quite a menagerie. The inmates paid first-class fares; but had they chosen to insist upon it, I doubt whether they could not have obtained accommodation in the cattle-truck. The gentleman who sat next to me might have gone under the seat for eighteenpence the entire journey, I am sure, if he would only have submitted to wear a dog-collar. He was, in one point of view, I believe, a major in the army on half-pay; but in another, he was a mastiff. I could well imagine him doing his duty on the parade-ground or the battle-field; but not less easily could I picture him hanging on to the under-lip of a bull. That he would

never have let go, if he once got his teeth in, I feel certain. His scowl was truly canine. Nature, perhaps, was occupied in shaping the features of some remarkably fine mastiff at the moment the infant major required her ornamental touches, and she must have got confused in her two creations. The mastiff, it may be, grew up with traits that should have belonged to my fellow-traveller, and was considered to be a very mild and gentlemanlike dog; but this is only an hypothesis: I wish to make excuse for our Common Mother wherever I can.

The gentleman opposite to me was, as he himself informed me, a corn and seed merchant; but he seemed to be totally unaware that he was also a guinea-pig. As he ran his little red eyes over the Radical newspaper, and showed his sharp little white teeth over something that pleased him, I had almost a mind to give him a lettuce, a basket of which, with other country produce, I was taking with me to town. When, in his bright, quick, charming manner, he offered the paper to the mastiff, that animal gave a savage growl of dissatisfaction, and shook his pendulous ears. They were both, however, polite, in their different ways, to a pretty little Italian greyhound on my left, who always wanted the window pulled up higher, and who shivered in her light garments as though it had been December instead of June. The tip of that little creature's nose was very cold; it was not necessary to

touch it to be assured of that; and her beautiful gazelle eyes looked wistfully forward to the end of our travel. If she had whined, I should not have been the least astonished.

There was a banker in the fifth seat who ought to have gone in the fish-train that preceded us, for he was a magnificent porpoise. He could not, indeed, have performed a succession of somersaults without great inconvenience, but he could have made as much noise as any of that class in his breathing, and indeed he did so. He was curiously mottled, too, as I believe is the case with the marine creature in question, while he was quite as spherical in form. If porpoises are in the habit of perpetually mopping their foreheads with their pocket-handkerchiefs, and ejaculating, "Gad, it's warm this morning," the resemblance would be perfect.

The individual who completed our carriageful was a most respectable old hen. Of course there were some points that distinguished her from the inhabitants of the poultry-yard. She cackled, however, throughout the journey, as though some oviparous triumph had been just achieved; while if she had had a whole coopful of chickens to take care of, nothing could have exceeded her anxiety and fidgetiness. She began to take down her reticule, her brown-paper parcel, and her nosegay from the "cradle" over her head, while she was yet five-and-forty miles from her

destination, in order that she might be in plenty of time. She spread out her ample wings about these articles as though a kite was hovering over them, and very nearly scratched out the guinea-pig's eyes with the ferrule of her umbrella. I thought the mastiff would have swallowed her, body and bones, when she begged him to move his legs (which were bandy), in order that her black bag might be extricated, at that premature period, from under the seat. I never saw any feathered female in a greater flutter than she when the guard demanded her ticket. This would never have been found, notwithstanding the exertions of our united Happy Family, had not the prying guinea-pig discovered it sticking out of her glove, in which she had originally placed it, with a view to its instant production upon demand. Her excessive exultation upon this event reminded me of her consort Chanticleer, of whom, as it seemed, she could never tell us too much. When we got to the terminus, that old cock was in waiting on the platform, consequential, red in the gills, and jubilant, as if the railway-station had been his own dunghill.

It is ridiculous of Nature to tell me that the resemblance of these fellow-creatures of mine to the lower animals exists merely in my fancy. It exists in every man's fancy. There is no one who does not number among his human acquaintance some half a dozen who have a facial claim upon the sympathies

of the Zoological Society. I have known the Lion of an evening party to partake in reality of some of the attributes of the great Carnivora, and not only at supper. Many "a little monkey" of a boy has reminded me of his namesake in other respects than by his fondness for nuts and mischief, and scratching his head; and I may even say that the tender term of "duck" has not been misapplied to more than one phlegmatic young female who has waddled into the affections of my once bachelor friends.

This interchange of feature—or rather of expression—between man and the lower animals, by which Nature ekes out her stock of creative materials, is, however, only one of the counts which I have to urge against her boasted originality. Besides this, I maintain that, instead of destroying the mould—as she is in some sort advertised by her flatterers to do, just as the proprietor of a picture to be engraved is understood to break up the plate after issuing his very limited number of copies—instead, I say, of destroying the mould from which an individual is turned out of her workshop, she issues one or more duplicates. By designedly placing these in different stations of life, she guards against detection as much as possible, but she cannot wholly do so, and I, for one, have discovered and denounced her. Why, there is scarcely a man or woman in the upper ten thousand who is not repeated as many times as there are ranks, at

least, down to the very lowest section of the community. I am not one of those who make a scoff at birth and rank, and say, "But for these gewgaws and externals, Lord Yornaway would' be but as his hall-porter, Joseph Snooze." I contend, in all sobriety, that they are identically the same persons. They are two fac-simile gingerbread kings exposed in the same booth in Vanity Fair, only one of them is gilt. Nature—who, by-the-bye, protests that she has nothing to do with either of them—has herein deliberately imposed upon the world in giving it one man under pretence of giving it two. They are equally weak-minded, equally lethargic, equally idle; they have an equal contempt, equally ill-grounded, for persons beneath them in social station; their religion, such as it is, is more alike than any thoughtful person can imagine two people's religion to be; their politics are alike, and even their methods of expressing their political opinions. Joseph, who owns a house or two in his lordship's borough, entrusts his vote to some Go-between, to be disposed of at the last moment and at the highest price; Lord Yornaway confides his proxy to the head of his party, and is, in consequence, not without his share of government patronage when that party is in power. The scores and scores of proxies that decide the great divisions of the Upper House emanate from noble personages who have all *their* exact counterparts among their dependents;

who, again, are accurately represented by others of inferior station, down to the Mob itself, of which, singularly enough, the noble lords stand in the deadliest terror—as though a man should be afraid of his own image.

There is nothing so like the thing which is called “a Swell” as a Swell’s valet. If the reader chance to have been so blessed as ever to have been present at a male dinner-party of distinction, in which most of the guests have had their own body-servant behind their chair, the proverb, “Like master, like man,” cannot fail to have occurred to him. The real reason why rich persons put their “people” into powder and canary suits is, I believe, that this likeness may be made less striking. When one beholds the fastidious A at his club, *the Cormorant*, threatening the servants with dismissal because one *entrée* has preceded instead of coming after another, and sending for the house-steward because the claret is a thought too cold, one thinks (and hopes) that there is not another A in the world. Whereas, in the same hour, *a*, his valet, is playing precisely the same tricks, although with inferior materials, at the famous Tripe Supper House in the vicinity of Regent Street.

Dr. Woodhay Fibre, F.R.S., the botanist of European reputation, is believed, and certainly believes himself, to be unparalleled by any of his fellow-

creatures. His knowledge, such as it is, has puffed him out like gas, and rendered his temper inflammable to the last degree. If you are foolish enough to ask him for any information, he insults you with his superiority; he either enters into a wearisome treatise upon the subject in question, prefaced by a few remarks upon the shamefulness of your own ignorance, or, more commonly, he does not answer you at all. This is preferable: "his bark," as a wit observed with reference to this gentleman's profession, "is even worse than his bite." But he is mistaken in supposing that Nature has not made another Woodhay Fibre. I was driving down to Woolwich the other day from town, to visit a young friend at the Royal Military Academy. To arrive at that spot, the usual road from Blackheath to Woolwich is not taken. Wanting information respecting the way, I pulled up in front of a cottage where an individual was busying himself in the garden, and asked my question with all imaginable courtesy. I don't know whether it was the occupation of this man—he was trimming a holly-tree—or his hard coarse features, which seemed to have been shaped out of lignum vitæ with a red-hot poker, but something about him reminded me so strikingly, the instant after I had addressed him, of Dr. W. F., that I repented having spoken. "Yer want to know the way to the Ryle Military Academy, yer?"

"Just so," said I cheerfully. "I suppose you know the way, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, then, please to tell me," returned I.

"No, I shan't; so there."

"Why not, my good friend?" inquired I, with genuine curiosity.

"Why, because then you'd be as wise as I am."

I thanked him, at some length and not without emphasis, for his kindness and good feeling, and drove away; and in ten minutes (for I went at a good pace, I confess, after this interview) I was as wise as my friend the gardener. But the similarity between him and the professor of botany impressed itself on me more and more as I thought of them. The gardener had, I believe, given me the true reason of the professor's reticence; he is jealous that other people should know what he knows—albeit, I suppose a few hours of study would let them into his greatest secrets. Now, I am not to be persuaded that these two men are only of the same genus—horrid plants of the class *Cacti*. I contend that Nature ought not to incur the odium of having made more than one of them—a single Cactus. And, for my part, I wish (with Nero) that they had but one stem, and could be changed to air-plants—which are benefited, I believe, by Hanging.

The universal introduction of machinery among mankind has perhaps put it into the head of Dame

Nature to produce the present human race by the same means, to the great saving of her inventive faculties. Certainly whole classes of us have their reflection in the grade beneath them, if we only stoop down a little and look with care. If we listen to the talk of watermen on a cab-stand, we shall find therein exactly the same dull prolixity, the same windy prophecies, the same nods, and winks, and poutings of the under-lip, that are understood to mean so much among the quidnuncs in the bow-windows of St. James's Street.

The idle, good-for-nothing fellows (as we call them) who "loaf" at the corners of the streets, with a straw in their mouths, and perhaps a fancy dog at their heels, we should recognise at once, if they had but a Club to lounge in. They are the fac-similes of a class of person in very good society who have an instinct for doing nothing, and a taste for horseflesh. The conclusion to be drawn from these undoubted facts may be humiliating to human arrogance, but surely teaches us a useful social lesson. We should not only be kind to a fellow-creature in a lower condition of life, because he is, as he is Somewhere termed, and conventionally understood to be, "our brother," but because he may be *ourself*. Nature is always manufacturing these duplicates, but as none of us know ourselves, so we are not likely to know our fac-similes. *We have not* all that faculty of recognition which the

Prince Regent exhibited upon perceiving Mr. Turveydrop near the Brighton Pavilion, when his Royal Highness did him the honour to inquire: "Who is he? Who the devil is he? Why don't I know him? Why hasn't he thirty thousand a year?"

To be conscious of our doubles is as rare as to have the gift of second-sight.

THE IRON-CLAD FAMILY.

It is well known that the Clads date their origin to what we may call the second period in the life of Adam and Eve, and that they are distributed over the whole of the earth's inhabited surface, with the exception of a few acres in the torrid zone. The Iron-clads are a more recent branch of the race, but are still both ancient and numerous. Powerful and warlike, they have always held their own in the World, and something more; and, indeed, their only declared enemies (although nobody loves them) have been the Hurt Family, who have no chance against them whatever. Resistance upon their part is of course out of the question, and it is even doubtful whether the Iron-clads are generally sensible of their complaints. When a great shriek rises from their united voices, their oppressors affect to be astonished, and to inquire what is the matter. "Why, who would have thought that one's heel (iron-rimmed, however) would have made such a mark? We really did not know that we were *walking* over you, or at least we didn't know it was

your face! And how very odd that it should have made your nose bleed!"

If anybody had walked over *them*, they would never have felt it, and they do not reflect that everybody is not provided with such impenetrable armour-plating as themselves. Talk of Parrot guns—the greatest gun that ever you set eyes on might practise upon a member of this family at short-range, until he burst himself, without making a dint. Armstrong and Whitworth might lay their heads together in vain for a projectile that would penetrate his shield of self-complacency and egotism. "Who is flirting these pellets of bread about?" murmurs Hurlothrumbo the giant. "Is it possible that they are intended for munitions of war?" His movements are like those of a rhinoceros among a litter of sucking-pigs; his little eyes, always turned inward in contemplation of his own greatness, see nothing of the frisking little ones, but his vast feet flatten them out with every stride, and not so much as a squeak invades his ragged ears. "You don't mean to say that was my doing!" cries he, when the agonized mother at last contrives to draw his attention to the condition of her offspring. "How indiscreet of them to get in my road!" And the huge earth-shaking beast pursues his way.

But the Iron-clad family are fortunately not all rhinoceroses; many of them are only armadillos. They do no harm, although they are themselves impervious

to all weapons. They trot about everywhere in their close-fitting coats-of-mail, no matter whether they are welcome or not, with an assurance that is quite ludicrous. "How are you, good Mrs. Hare?" says one to that poor lady, who, with her weeping leverets, is lamenting the late murder of her harmless spouse, and not at all in a humour for receiving company. "How are you all? What beautiful weather! How are the crops? How are the turnips?"—so wrapped up in his own object (which is to get a cup of tea, perhaps, or whatever happens to be going), that he does not see how hateful are his commonplaces. Even when she is telling him what has befallen her, he has scarcely patience to listen, his mind being solely intent upon who will be the next most likely folks to satisfy his little cravings. "Dead, did you say? Dear me, dear me, dear me: then where am I to get my tea?"

The armadillo thinks it very hard that people should get torn to pieces so inopportunistically. "Surely, if anybody has the right to be annoyed in the matter, it is he! What the Hare family can have to complain of in *his* conduct, he can't conceive! He expressed himself very kindly upon what had occurred, he is sure—very kindly, and even recommended a cup of tea."

You can no more quarrel with the armadillo than with a man who wants to borrow money of you. He *will take* anything that is going (as I have said) ex-

cept offence; that is the only thing which he thinks it better to give than to receive. "Why we should misunderstand one another, and thus unnecessarily make a battle-field of life, which for his part he prefers to consider a beautiful green space, suitable for healthful sports, is to him incomprehensible!"

If those philosophers be correct who define Happiness as freedom from pain, the Iron-clads are blessed indeed. They do not mind partaking as freely as they can of all the joys of their fellow-creatures, while their sorrows never touch them. Their digestion is never put out by virtuous indignation at any wrong; their pulses are never quickened, or their blood heated, by any enthusiasms, social, political, artistic, or religious. Without being philanthropic, they are extremely charitable, at least in so far as expression of opinion goes. Not being in the least affected by the assassination or robbery of other people, they are very lenient to criminals. They pride themselves upon contemplating dispassionately the most outrageous acts of wickedness. They pronounce Garrotting—when the incident occurs to their friends—to be the natural bent of great physical powers unsublimed by educational training; and speak of Arson (when it is their neighbours' ricks to which the lucifer has been applied) as a practice alike injudicious and reprehensible. They take no pleasure in the misfortunes of society, it is true; but they will not stir a finger to re-

move them. They would not, like Nero, fiddle while their metropolis was burning; but neither would they trouble themselves so much as to cry "Fire!" so long as a ladder was placed at their own bedroom window, and a powerful engine in the immediate vicinity prepared to play upon their premises.

All these, whether rhinoceroses or armadillos, are the Iron-clads proper, whom Nature herself has furnished with impenetrable mail. But besides these, there are a much larger class of people who have adopted the same style of clothing from necessity, whose very profession compels them to assume it, but who, out of that particular calling, are persons with the like feelings as ourselves, or, at all events, have been so at one time, before their mail, from long use, began to stick to them, and became identical with their own proper skin. Of these, the principal examples, beside the Borrower (already spoken of), and his near kinsman the Beggar, are the Bore, the too familiar Servant, the Professional Swindler, and the Poor Relation. Perhaps I may add to these the habitual Liar, whom custom has so hardened to openly expressed disbelief and contradiction, that he is unconscious of the insult they imply.

There is generally something humorous about the habitual Liar, which greatly mitigates his peculiarities, and he is almost always good-tempered: and upon *the whole*, although a most unprincipled character, he

may be considered to be the least offensive of the Iron-clads. Now, the Bore, although less vicious in a moral point of view, is infinitely more disagreeable. I have often thought that his name might with equal meaning be spelt Boar. He pursues his stupid stories and experiences with the same pertinacity with which that unpleasant beast of the forest prods the earth in search of food: upon any subject which he does not himself originate, he has no remark to utter beyond a dissatisfied grunt; while, as for making him conscious that he is in your way, by any missile known to civilized man, the attempt is well known to be hopeless.

The spoiled Domestic, or too familiar Servant, may be thought, perhaps, too small an evil to be here catalogued with his betters—or his “worsers”—and yet he has been a pest of society as long as there have been servants at all. We are even warned against him, lest he become our master, in the Scriptures themselves. There is no limit of degree to his coolness—he is below zero altogether, although, unfortunately, not beneath our contempt, for his behaviour is irritating and annoying. One does not like to set him down one’s self, and yet his employer cannot be persuaded to undertake that most necessary duty. Beyond a certain thickness, our armour-plated vessels will not float; but the specific gravity of the favour of a foolish master is such that it will sustain

any burden of this nature. The most amusing example of it I ever witnessed was at breakfast in a certain great country-house, where the butler brought in the letters, and handed them to his noble master with a running commentary upon each. "One from Mrs. Pechell, my lord, and one from Sir Henry Carstairs; but this one"—here he held up a foreign-post letter against the light, and tried to read through the thin envelope—"I really can't tell who it comes from, my lord."

The Professional Swindler can scarcely be an Iron-clad by birth. It is absolutely necessary to the success of his calling that he should be at least cognizant of the feelings of his fellow creatures, in order that he may use them for his own ends; nay, he ought to be acquainted with their most secret springs of action, and the most subtle influences that sway their lives. On the other hand, he must have parted with every vestige of self-respect, and be prepared to be taken at any moment through the public streets handcuffed to a policeman in uniform. I have no personal acquaintance with any member of this branch of the Iron-clad Family myself—although I should think he would be a most interesting subject of study, and well worth knowing—but an uncle of mine had a curious experience of a gentleman in this line of business. There was a certain public dinner to be *given at a county town* to its representative in Parlia-

ment, and among the invited guests was the relative I speak of. He went down to this entertainment by railway from London, starting from the Paddington station. In the same carriage with him was a strange gentleman, who seemed, by his conversation, to be bound upon the same errand; indeed, he produced a card of invitation to the banquet, and appeared to be intimately acquainted with the people and politics of the locality in question. My uncle, however, who was a reserved man, was by no means favourably impressed with his companion. He disliked the manner in which he pressed his conversation upon him, and especially the familiar style in which he addressed him when some fellow-passengers joined them at Slough. He told me that he felt obliged to treat this person with some hauteur—wherefrom I gather, judging by what I know of my respected relative, that he must have been extremely rude to him; but this line of conduct was quite unavailing. His new acquaintance stuck to him like a brother; or, perhaps, considering what family ties are often composed of, it would be more graphic to say like a bur. He got into the same fly with him, when they arrived at their destination, and got out at the same hotel. My uncle had no occasion to nurse his wrath, which some new impertinence and familiarity upon the part of this individual kept sufficiently warm; but he in vain attempted, in his turn, to rouse the anger of the other.

He was either the most good-natured man in the world, or was ignorant of the language of insult. At the public dinner, my relative imagined that he had got rid of this incubus, as he was not visible among the guests; but hardly had all sat down, when a waiter, pointing to a chair next to his own, the position of which intimated that it was "reserved," remarked obsequiously: "Your friend is rather late, sir; but I have kept this seat according to his directions." In another minute the dreadful stranger had taken his seat at my uncle's right, and was making conversation—or rather monologue, for my injured relative refused to answer him one word. He watched his neighbour, however, very narrowly, and before the entertainment came to a close, found ample opportunity for vengeance. When the last course was finished, and the things were being cleared away, my uncle stuck his dessert-spoon in his button-hole as though it had been a lily of the valley.

"Sir," said the waiter, "excuse me, but you have—ahem—I'm sorry to trouble you, but I am answerable for the plate."

"But why," urged my uncle, "should I not carry away one spoon, as a memento of this interesting occasion, when this gentleman here (pointing to his neighbour) has got his pocket full of spoons and forks?" With that he rose, and seizing his too familiar acquaintance by the collar, shook him until the stolen

plate rattled in his tail-pockets like Apollo's arrows in their quiver.

There was, of course, rather a scene; but the swindler, although caught in the very act, behaved with such admirable coolness as almost redeemed his crime in my uncle's eyes. Nothing had become him throughout that entertainment, in which he had so striven to please, as the leaving of it, which he did in custody, but with the air of a good man, whose actions had been grievously misunderstood, but who could yet forgive his enemies. "He was not so much an Iron-clad," remarked my caustic relative, "as iron solid."

But, after all, there is no offshoot of this extraordinary family more remarkable than the Poor Relation, inasmuch as, though impenetrable as any he calls forth the pity of all beholders. For the rest of his race, nobody entertains one spark of sympathy, but for this unhappy person, whom years of neglect and insolence have rendered callous to slight and contumely, who does not feel commiseration? To see him enter the room of some more fortunate member of his clan, opening the door only just so wide as to admit his person, and with an apology for his presence speaking from each submissive feature, is a most painful spectacle, until one has learned to know that he himself suffers no pain. The Eton boy who has been "swished" seven times has no more reason

to fear the infliction of the rod. The cuticle has by that time adapted itself, and with the exception of a certain deliberation in the choice of a chair (which results from habit alone), there is nothing to distinguish the martyr (however recent has been the infliction of his torture) from any companion whose peccadilloes (for boys always *deserve* flogging) have been better concealed. By this same beneficent arrangement—or the principle of Natural Selection, if you prefer to think so—the Poor Relation becomes as thick-skinned as his rich kinsman the rhinoceros, in whose house we so often meet him. He knows that he is not welcome; but he has got over that; and so long as he gets his meat and drink, it matters little that they are thrown to him, and that with a very bad grace. This sycophancy awakens our contempt when it is seen in any man of able body who can procure bread for himself by stone-breaking, for the days of led-captains are past; but when the Poor Relation is a female, friendless, and, as generally happens, not very young, we entertain for her a profound pity. It is long before we can persuade ourselves that she is an Iron-clad, as invulnerable in her way as her ungracious host; that her mail is proof against all slights, as his against all good-feeling. Yet this is as often as not the case.

I remember a certain provincial rhinoceros, who *lived in a huge red house in a country town, in which*

he was banker, brewer, and agent for a great territorial lord. He was so puffed up by these various dignities, and the emoluments attached to them, that were it not for his strong and horny hide, he would perhaps have burst. To listen to the way in which he laid down the law after dinner upon the questions of Bullion, Malt, and the Landed Interest, was well worth the humiliation of dining in a company of vulgar flatterers, such as always fed at his table. For once and a way, it was a great treat; but how it could have been endured week after week—for he was very hospitable after his dreadful manner—is more than any man, not being an Iron-clad, can tell. His relatives and dependents were very numerous, and received not so much invitations as “commands” to attend his banquets, such as those which are issued by her Majesty the Queen. There were some who were asked every week, some but once a month, and some only on particular festivals, such as Christmas Day, Lady Day (he always honoured that anniversary), Ash Wednesday (for he was a sort of man who revelled in parsnips), and Easter Monday. His guests could be all reached by messenger, for their humble dwellings clustered about his great house like a Norman hamlet about the castle of their seigneur, and that messenger was welcomed like an angel. Of all these folks, there was but one who interested me at all, except as an unpleasant study from human

nature; this was a little old maiden lady, whose meek manners and silver hair had earned for her the title of the White Mouse. She was a very distant cousin of the rhinoceros, and was only commanded to the Red House upon the high days and holy days I have mentioned, and their rarity greatly enhanced to her the value of those invitations. I had been long compelled to admit to myself that the White Mouse was an Iron-clad, but still I liked her; and if there was a person left in all the world to whom the White Mouse would have confided anything, I knew it would have been to me.

Nevertheless, I was surprised when she called upon me on the day before Michaelmas Day, and having requested a private interview, burst sudden as a fountain into tears. I could not have imagined that this good lady, whom I had seen publicly slighted in a manner that would have sent three-fourths of her sex into hysterics, but at which she had only smiled, had possessed such a thing as a lachrymal duct.

"Oh, do read this," said she, bringing out a letter, on the envelope of which I recognised the handwriting of the rhinoceros, "and tell me what I am to do, and how I am to make it up with him. He has asked me to dine with him on Michaelmas Day for twenty years, and now, see, there is not a word about it in his letter from first to last."

There certainly was not a word about dinner; on

the contrary, it was evident that the old wretch was angry with the poor little Mouse for some real or imagined cause. It was a stiff and rather high-flown letter (especially ill adapted for its recipient), with scraps of Latin in it (which were Greek to her); but it was easy for anybody to see that the writer was intentionally rude and disagreeable. If I had not known she was an Iron-clad, I should have addressed her thus: "My dear madam, here is an excellent opportunity for severing an unpleasant connection. I have often seen this rhinoceros behave scornfully and cruelly towards you. True, you are not rich, but you have enough to live upon; why, then, should you put up any longer with the rudenesses of a man who has never given you anything in his life, I believe, beyond roast goose and apple sauce?" But knowing my White Mouse as I did, I took a very different line.

"The letter is certainly disagreeable," said I, "but then that's only his way. He is angry with you, but he means you to come after all."

"Oh, *do* you think so?" cries the poor creature, clasping her hands, and looking at me like some erring suppliant at the Peri who keeps the gate of Paradise—"do you really think so?"

"Yes," returned I gravely, "for what else can he mean by this *e.g.?*" I guessed that she had never heard of *exempli gratiâ*, and I guessed right. "This is his arch way of inviting you, my dear madam, you

may depend upon it that *e.g.* stands for 'Eat Goose;' I am perfectly certain of it."

"Bless me!" cried the White Mouse! "why, of course it does. How very stupid of me?"

And this little impenetrable Iron-clad actually went and dined with the rhinoceros the next day upon that meagre hint of welcome, and was not, I dare say, treated much worse than usual. Surely never had White Mouse so thick a skin as she.

THE HURT FAMILY.

It would form a peculiarly interesting study for the genealogist or the antiquarian to endeavour to trace back the Hurt family to its commencement. It is probably of very ancient date. There are records both of it and of its junior branch—the Thinskins—in the very earliest chronicles of the world's history. There is only one limit, indeed, to their excessive antiquity, and that is this: they were not the very first generation of men and women. Adam and Eve, we are perfectly certain, were not a Mr. and Mrs. Hurt. For it is peculiar to this family that each generation of them is contemporaneous with one's own parents. They are one's father's and one's mother's friends; and they have known ourselves before we were born, or at least possessed certain information about our appearance in the world, "in anticipation" of the general public.

In ancient times they must have been very terrible. Towns have been doubtless sacked, and districts ravaged on account of fancied slights committed against this powerful race; and even now their enmity

is by all means to be avoided—*if it be possible*. This, however, is a question to be considered. *Is* it humanly possible to avoid offending the Hurt family? They have generally a comfortable dwelling with spare rooms in it; tolerable wines (which must be praised), and an abundant table; and they have almost always money to leave behind them. At first sight, therefore, it would seem to be the height of madness in needy persons to give umbrage to such useful folks. To quarrel with the Hurt family is to quarrel with their bread and butter. As when war is desired, however, by the stronger of two nations, a cause of rupture is never wanting, so that offence must needs be given by their humble friends, for which the Hurt family are continually upon the watch. It is not—to do them justice—any base flattery nor even humility for which they look, but they are exacting to a pitiless degree. They demand from their fellow-creatures what they call “attention,” which means the fulfilment not only of offices of kindness and duty, but those superficial conventionalities that Society has instituted, but which are always waived among intimates. No *man* that ever I heard of, and only the feeblest class of women, is fond of making what are termed “morning calls”—one of the peculiarities of which, by-the-bye, is that they must not be made before 2.30 p.m. The whole proceeding is meaningless, and, to the male sex, *absolutely* degrading. The solemn inquiry addressed to

the footman as to whether his mistress is at home, when the heart is fluttering with secret hope that she is not; the expression of regret that parts our hypocritical lips when we learn she is gone out for a drive, or a walk, or an aerial trip in the Nassau Balloon—no matter how or whither, so long as she is *gone*; the resigned air, on the other hand, with which we ascend the stair to the drawing-room floor, and the galvanic joy with which we exchange *How-are-you's* for *How are you's*? and then subside into sucking the handles of our umbrellas.

“A beautiful day—isn't it?”

“Yes, *indeed* it is”—lady looks out of window to make sure though, for in reality she knows nothing about it.

“A great many beautiful days lately.”

“Yes, indeed”—lady lifts up her eyes as if you had pulled a string in connection with them—“we ought to be very thankful.” The thing that the whole country is yearning for being Much Rain.

“We have had a great deal of beautiful weather upon the whole.”

“Yes—we really have,” replies the lady “*considering*”—as though she meant to say considering the malevolence of the laws of nature.

Now these social imbecilities can scarcely afford pleasure to anybody, but if they do not occur at least

once in three weeks, the lady, being of the Hurt family, is deeply aggrieved.

"We never see you now, Mr. Edward," she will remark at our next meeting; "but of course we cannot expect to do so. There is so little attraction to tempt you to Baker Street. Nay, if it were otherwise, you would certainly look in now and then. Pray don't apologize. An old widow woman living by herself in a humdrum fashion cannot expect much attention from young people. Your poor dear father would not have kept away from me so long, but—heigho!—times are changed."

Mrs. Hurt has been becoming more and more statuesque with every sentence, and at the close of these remarks her countenance is perfectly rigid. If you would evoke a smile upon it, you must send for a mallet and chisel.

This species of exaction is bad enough even in town, but when you are taking your one month's holiday at the sea-coast, or in the country, it becomes oppressive indeed. The Hurts live within half a dozen miles of the locality we have chosen, a distance which, in their ignorance of the science of projectiles, they term a "stone's-throw." Under such circumstances, is it not rather strange (they hint to a common friend) that Edward and his wife have only been once to see us—once in ten days? They are sure *that there* can be nothing so *very* particular to be

done at Pierville or Summerton. They are quite unaware that the great charm of those spots consists in their being homes of idleness—places where a gentleman can go about with a clay pipe; and a lady with her back-hair down; they imagine that a drive in a fusty fly over twelve miles of straight white road would be a more agreeable relaxation than making dick-duck-drakes in the sea with flattish pebbles. They know “some very nice people, and highly connected” at Pierville—“residents, my dear, with a house and grounds, and well worth knowing”—and they persuade these superior folks to drive to our lodgings, and leave their names upon glazed cardboard—“Major and the Hon. Mrs. Snuphkins, Cliff House.” An afternoon has then to be sacrificed by my wife in a return-visit; for it will never do for her to call at Cliff House in her seaside hat, or in the dress in which she sits on the sand and plays with the children. In a few days after that act of self-devotion, she gets a letter from the Hurts that makes her cry. Why, in the name of good-manners, they demand, did not Edward return the Snuphkins’s call as well as herself? Was he to put himself, forsooth, above the usages of polite society? Consider the extreme painfulness of the position in which *they*—the Hurts—had been placed by this uncivilized conduct. The major was a person of the greatest good-nature, but it could not but be expected that he would be

annoyed. He had been asked to call upon us as a personal favour, although the Snuphkinses never *did* call upon mere visitors—they were so excessively (and justifiably) exclusive—and now they, the Hurts, had laid themselves under that obligation to no purpose. They should positively have to apologize at Cliff House for Edward's queer ways. How different from his dear father, who was all politeness!

If the Hurts live in the same town as yourself, let us trust that it may be London. In that gigantic city it is possible that your domestic acts may escape their cognizance, but in no other place. Liverpool is not extensive enough to hinder this, I *know*—nor yet Manchester. They will know within twenty-four hours—I do not say of your having had a *dinner-party*, for they will be in possession of *that* fact before it comes off, but—of your having asked a friend to stay and take pot-luck. Now that is a thing, they will beg to observe, that you have never asked *them* to do. In all the years they have known you, since you were *That* high [as if boys of two feet two inches could ask people to dinner], you have never yet asked them to drop in in a friendly way. They don't complain of this—far from it; they have been taught to expect too much, perhaps, from the genial hospitalities of your poor dear father—only they must say they like a little attention. They would not have easily forgotten a *kindness* of this sort, as would be the case in all

probability with Mr. Jones, the guest in question. For who is this Mr. Jones? A respectable individual, they hope, although the name of Jones has been mixed up with some very strange transactions, but a man of yesterday, a creature of the hour. Of course, Edward might ask whom he liked, and not ask others; but it did seem, to say the least of it, Very Strange.

Now, to have asked any member of the Hurt family to take pot-luck, would have been an act of rashness equivalent to that of a ship's captain inviting a party of friends to smoke in the powder-magazine. It would be perfectly certain to bring about a blow-up. The lack of anything at the dinner-table would be ascribed, not to want of preparation, but to a deliberate act of contempt towards him or her.

"No cauliflower—great Heavens, no cauliflower!" were the last words ever uttered to me by Richard Hurt, M.D., my godfather, who, having been invited to our table in a hurry, was so offended by the absence of his favourite vegetable, that he took himself off incontinently in a hansom, and passed the time which should have been devoted to wine and walnuts in cutting me out of his will.

It is not, however, to be imagined that sensitiveness is the cause of the impracticability of the Hurt family; they are only egotistically irritable, or, to express it in one word without any synonym, they are Touchy. They do not shrink, as sensitive people do,

from every description of fracas; but, on the contrary, delight in the same. The female Hurts are attracted to a misunderstanding just as a fighting butcher-boy is drawn towards a street row. They amplify it, they complicate it, they endeavour to ward off any reasonable explanation of it, exactly as the butcher-boy swells the tumult, and endeavours to divert the attention of the police. When they have got themselves well offended, they rise majestically, they sweep from the scene of action with imperial scorn, they waver upon the staircase, they burst into floods of tears in the four-wheeled cab, and arrive at their own house outraged and happy. The frame of mind which suits their natures best is that which is called "a Huff." They are conscious of indignity, of unspeakable wrong, of having experienced the basest ingratitude; but, on the other hand, how their heart yearns toward the wretches whom it is its duty from henceforth to forget! If it had only been an enemy that had done this—but Edward—well, they only most sincerely hope that it will not make his poor dear father turn in his grave!

The Hurts, who are really excellent people, have a very large circle of friends who are constantly being lost for ever to their bosoms—"I may forgive, my dear, but I can never, *never* forget the behaviour of those Robinsons"—or being received back again with the most affecting ceremonies. To keep on good *terms with them*, and at the same time to be intimate,

is not, I believe, in the power of man, and certainly not in that of woman. Total and immediate flight from their neighbourhood may indeed offend them mortally, but I think this course to be less dangerous than the living in the same town, or metropolitan district. Even in this case, however, the perils of letter-writing to the Hurt family have to be encountered.

Mrs. Hurt writes to one's wife, "Of course you have much to do, my dear, with your fourteen children, and I trust I am not inconsiderate—that is the *last thing*, I think, I can be accused of—but a letter from you *now and then*, say once a week, would be a pleasant attention. As for Edward, of course he never condescends to drop me one line; his poor dear father was one of the best correspondents that ever breathed."

SCHOOL LEGENDS.

WHEN a sight-seer who is "a distinguished stranger" visits any of our old foundation schools, he is often conducted over the place by the head-master himself, who is not always all affability, even on such occasions—and crammed with historical *ana*. "Here," he is told, "is the wing devised by King Alfred, but not entirely completed until the reign of Henry VI. That statue in the niche over the gateway is Henry VIII, of pious memory, who built the chapel. We never disturb the birds that build in his royal crown; visitors have often objected, but they should provide themselves with umbrellas. That gorgeous pile is the library; no, it is never used by the boys, but they are allowed to play beneath it in wet weather. A hundred and forty of them sleep in the Gallery Chamber; a dormitory for which we are indebted to the Lady Margaret, sister of—I beg your pardon, Mr. Tallboys, I did not know you were within. That is a monitor's room; they have apartments over the Gallery Chamber to themselves—formerly cells. These are the Cloisters. *The blessed martyr, Charles I., caused them to be*

erected at his own expense, and doubtless would have paid for them, but for the unhappy troubles that subsequently overtook him. Observe the monogram beneath the sculptured flower at the eastern end. One of our wits observed that it would not have escaped the fanatic rage of the Puritans had it not been 'under the Rose.' Yes, we have produced many wits—statesmen, warriors, poets, men of science, divines. Atterbury lived on yonder staircase—I mean, of course, in one of the rooms off the stairs; we speak technically here. We expect others to learn our language, not we theirs. His favourite game was fives. He is said to have been the first who broke the great painted window above the communion-table. It was often done, however. It was renewed, at vast expense, in 1760, and the wirework placed outside. Yes; that is the reason why the whole place looks, as you say, as if it wore a fencing-mask. Otherwise, there would not be an entire window. Boys will lithoballize. Newton occupied that room. We did not make much of him, since we give our attention to the classics mainly. He gave no indication of his future fame, except in his extreme partiality for apples. Keats—Keats—Keats—I never heard of him. There may have been such a boy, but not in my time; his name is not upon the screens. All names of eminence will be found there—Howard, Cavendish, Dacre. See how long ago the upper rows were carved. There is a Wolsey, look

you, supposed to have been somewhat too near kin to the great Churchman. The porter carves them still for a small fee. The view through the Oriel is considered fine. The trees, as you remark, would grace a park indeed; there are few parks so noble. The fields about the river are very rich. Yes; all is ours, so far as you see. Princely, you say; why not? It was given by a line of kings; hence youths of royal descent possess, while with us, considerable privileges. We have had three dukes at once here. True, everything here is old, and plain, and cheap, and simple; that is what we pride ourselves upon. Do you insist on seeing the flogging-room? Sir, I do not defend the system: I am not aware that the system needs defence. About thirteen a day is our average for punishment. I am not aware that the disgrace has ever impelled a youth to self-destruction. An occurrence of that nature may have been described in the penny papers, or you may have read of it in a foreign novel; such reports do not certainly affect our numbers. Yes, we had Shelley here. I dare say he knew this block. He was very troublesome, it is said, to the authorities. Would you please to see his room? After that it will be luncheon-time. May I beg the favour of your honouring 'the Lodge' by partaking therein of some refreshment?"

Now, all these things the head-master speaks of *you will find* in the *Guide Books* to Winchester, Eton,

Westminster, etc.; and the "distinguished stranger" might have got all he obtains from that dignitary (except the lunch) for the small charge of one shilling. And, after all, he has not been put in possession of one *bonâ-fide* tradition of the place. Its genuine legends do not concern themselves with kings and queens, or with the divines, or poets, or historical personages of any kind who may in their youth have inhabited its sacred shades. One or two students may, indeed, be excited to emulation by the thought that Milton once lived in the chamber above him, or Barrow underneath, but to the vast majority such things are nothing in comparison to the interest that hangs about Fib Corner, for instance, where the fifth-form boy was killed in fight by the fourth-form boy, in the nine-and-thirtieth round.

Fib Corner is a pleasant pastoral spot in the great playgrounds close to the winding river, a very haunt of peace and solitude, but with advantages for single combat within a ring of personal friends that are unequalled. In the first place, the lofty elms grow thick about it, and intercept the view of the school authorities, in case they should think it incumbent on them to interfere in a "mill," which, to do them justice, they are very slow to do; and secondly, the water is convenient to wash off sanguinary stains, and to revive the drooping energies of a youthful gladiator. New boys are brought here by their friends who have come

up to the school before them, and informed of all the circumstances (and more) of that fatal encounter; how the fifth-form boy had endeavoured to "fag" the fourth-form boy, as it was his right and privilege to do; and how the fourth-form boy had resisted, and dared him to combat; whereupon the fifth-form boy, waiving his dignity, and calling in no extraneous power, as he might have done, to make himself obeyed, accepted the challenge; and how they fought under the sheltering elms in the summer night from tea-time until "lock-up"—the hour for retiring to rest. How all the fifth and sixth—the upper house of the school—rallied round *their* champion, and all the rest, the oppressed juniors, around theirs; and how each had a pair of seconds, who were anxious to fight too, but a Court of Honour decided against that chivalrous impulse. How at first the fifth-form boy had the better of it, being taller and having a longer reach; but how presently the other, who was more strongly built, obtained the supremacy. Then the long detail of the conflict, described by the narrator in a style half-romantic, half-real life, or rather *Bell's Life*; the awful point of brandy being served out as an artificial stimulus being greatly dwelt upon; also the last knock-down blow administered by the victor, and the horror of the bystanders when the vanquished was found unable to stand up or speak. "He was dead, you know," explains the narrator, in a tone adapted for

such a calamity; "and since then all 'mills' have been stopped at the eight-and-thirtieth round, and no fifth-form boy has ever fought a fourth-form boy."

"Does he—does he *walk*?" inquires the new-comer with hesitation.

"I believe you," replies the oldster; "and especially up and down the west cloister, into which, by-the-bye, if I remember rightly, your bedroom-window looks."

Without doubt such a fight occurred and with a fatal result. But it had no more to do with the question of fagging than with the abolition of the corn laws. That poetical rendering of the matter grew up long after the event, although it now forms the most popular portion of the legend, and that most implicitly believed in, particularly by the fourth form.

The British Boy is Father to the Man in his submission to authority, as established by usage and precedent. He opposes his pastors and masters much more obstinately than the unwritten power abiding in monitors and the upper forms; however distasteful this may be to him, he bows to it in almost servile fashion—very, very seldom, and only in the extremest cases rising in revolution—but the legends of liberty are dear to him; he does not resist, but he cherishes the records of resistance. Perhaps, when he becomes an upper boy himself, he has doubts of the authenticity of such stories, but while in a subordinate position he

accepts them like a religion. When suffering under tyranny, he reflects upon the reputed conduct of school heroes, such as Hampden *major*, with savage exultation. Hampden was a big boy of small wits, who remained in the lower forms, through inability to compose Sapphics, for an unparalleled period. He welcomed many generations of small boys with kicks and cuffs, who passed him, one after another, in the educational course, and became in a position to kick and cuff him with delightful impunity; but somehow they didn't do it. A remnant of their ancient respect for him forbade it, or perhaps his gigantic proportions were not without their preserving influence still. Moreover, there was a Hampden *minor* high up in the school, whose power protected his elder brother from annoyance. This was reported to arise, not so much from fraternal love, as from the fact that Hampden *major* used to "take it out of" him in the holidays; for it was observed that the latter was much more affectionate towards the former whenever the vacations were drawing near. However, the younger of the two departed for college, and Hampden *major* was left, still in the lower departments, without a natural protector. It was whispered that his brother had let it be known that he, for his part, should not be displeased if he heard, in his retirement at Oxford, that his too formidable relative had "caught it" after his departure. At all events, a certain monitor, being

displeased, requested the giant's presence in his private apartment, in order to receive a thrashing. The giant, grimly sarcastic, replied that the young gentleman had better come to *him* to enjoy the amusement in question. The monitor, being of a wary disposition, or perhaps endowed with less of personal courage than of personal authority, declined this invitation, and referred the matter to his brother monitors in council assembled. The council sent word that Hampden *major*, having thus committed an act of gross insubordination, must receive "a monitors' thrashing," administered by the whole twenty-four, and for that purpose appointed an hour and a torture-chamber. The giant, more recalcitrant than ever, sent gruff reply that if they wanted him they must fetch him, and straightway barricaded himself into his own room. The four-and-twenty, burning with indignation at this contempt of court, thereupon besieged him, each with a knotted handkerchief in his pocket for the purpose of inflicting due and proper punishment. The giant, armed with a strong fire-shovel, awaited events with calm determination. When the door was broken in, and over the shattered bedstead and smashed chest of drawers clambered the leading monitor, he clove his nose with such accuracy, that no anatomist could have divided it more satisfactorily with a scalpel. It lay, one half on each of his cheeks, like epaulettes. At this most discouraging sight, the dauntless twenty-

three are reported to have turned their backs and fled ignominiously away. So at least is the story told and credited. What matters it though Hampden *major* was taken in hand by the authorities and expelled forthwith? He went forth victorious, and his memory is dear to all who suffer. "Oh for those tents which in old time whitened the sacred hill!" "Oh for Hampden *major* and his well-directed fire-shovel!" is the cry of many a public schoolboy before he rises from the ranks, and perceives the beauty of implicit obedience to one's superiors.

In one great school there is, or was, an ancient iron fender to which, it is whispered, a small boy was once tied in front of a blazing fire and roasted to death. The intention had been only to singe him a little, but the school-bell happened to ring during the operation, and his persecutors ran away and forgot him. At another school there is a bedroom window pointed out, to whose iron bars a lad was once fastened, in his night-clothes only, and left out for a winter's night. Both these legends are untrue, but their very existence proves the atrocious cruelty that was permitted in old times to be exercised by juvenile despots. Such things are happily of the past, and will never be repeated; but there is little chance of their records being altogether obliterated; one generation tells them to another in the very place where *these catastrophes* are said to have taken place, and

the attraction of them does not diminish. Why should it? The juvenile Public has a right to its Sensations as well as we. Besides, the belief that such things have happened reconciles one to minor inconveniences. That roasting story has comforted many a youthful bosom while making toast (happily of slices of bread) for a fastidious "fifth form"!

School legends are rarely droll. It is a mistake to suppose that a boy is a humorous creature. In all my school experience, which has been extensive, I only remember one good practical joke. This occurred at a private and preparatory school, where, however, some boys were tolerably old. It had a certain usher, learned, lethargic, ignorant of the world, who was a character in his way. He made excellent contemptuous remarks upon his employer, the head-master, and was in consequence popular amongst us, but we could not resist playing him tricks. We persuaded him that, being so wise and superior in every respect as he was, he ought to set up a school on his own account. He ought to advertise for pupils at a hundred and fifty pounds a year at the very least, and he actually did so. Having showed one of us—a lad of the name of Griffith—the advertisement in question, with considerable pride, it was considered only grateful by that young gentleman to invent a reply to it. The boy had a very rich relative, who had quarrelled with his family. The property was

entailed on Griffith, in case this gentleman had no more direct heir, and he was childless. This circumstance was extremely obnoxious to him, and he could not bear any allusion to it. Under these circumstances, Griffith forged a letter purporting to come from this old gentleman, in answer to the usher's advertisement. It set forth that he was the father of three sons, all of whom he was anxious to have privately educated; money was quite a secondary object; but a personal interview with the advertiser was indispensable. That unfortunate usher travelled into the heart of Wales after these apocryphal pupils. He presented himself at the irascible old gentleman's house, and was admitted into his library, but only to emerge amid a torrent of Welsh invective, and not, it is whispered, without some personal violence. He came back to us gloomy beyond measure in temper, and with two black eyes. We who were in his class had enjoyed a delightful holiday during his absence. I think he had his suspicions of Griffith, because he gave him such very long impositions ever afterwards; but that was Griffith's "look-out," and not ours. The humour of the thing, as far as we were concerned, was perfect, and we never thought of it without a chuckle. We stilled our scruples by reflecting that it was very mean of the victim to advertise for pupils, in opposition, as it were, to his own employer. The schoolboy conscience is easily quieted; and I dare say that trick

upon the usher is now one of the most favourite legends of the school where it took place.

Again, at a public school, to which I subsequently went, a noble lord misbehaved himself. I forget what precise misdemeanour he committed, but the punishment awarded to the same he took in dudgeon; or rather, he did not take it at all, for he ran away. Arrived at his ancestral home, he was received by no means with rapture, and indeed his father insisted upon his return to school forthwith. This, however, was easier said than done. The head-master was obdurate; no boy who had committed the offence of running away could ever be received again in that royal foundation school over which he had the honour to preside. The noble parent of Lord Robert Fitzlollypop was an object of sincere respect to him; but he must perform his duty. There was one condition, and only one, upon which his son could be received once more, and that involved some disgrace and considerable exposure. Lord Robert must submit to a public flogging.

Now, as a matter of fact, all floggings at this famous seminary were administered in public. All the personal friends of the victim were admitted to the scene of torture, and the only limit imposed was the number of spectators that could be accommodated in the apartment; but, upon this occasion, the scene of operations was transferred to the Great Chamber,

so that the whole school might attend, if they thought proper; and they did think proper. It is impossible to describe the ceremony. I cannot set down on paper what has befallen half the present statesmen of Great Britain in their adolescence, for the same reason that forbids the worst police-cases to appear in print: "the details are totally unfit for publication." Suffice it to say that the birch was a fine specimen of its kind, and was charged for in the subsequent bill to the victim's noble father in the sum of twenty-one shillings.*

A juvenile duke stood by to see that his noble friend (whose peculiar position precluded his looking for himself) was not too severely punished by the head-master raising his hand above his head, or to exact the dozen of wine in his behalf, which, according to an immemorial School Legend, was his due, in case that wrong was done. The two foundation scholars, whose duty on such occasions is so unexampled, were chosen from the best families. Altogether, the Fitzlollypop "Swishing" was a ceremony which will never be forgotten. You may not only

* It is fair to state that all of us—whether lords or commoners—paid that precise sum for birch—whether used or not—at the school in question; new birches were applied to each offender, albeit we would have much preferred their being second-hand; for the buds came off in the infliction, and it was the buds which more particularly caused us to wish, on the ensuing day, that the school *forms had cushions* upon them.

read his noble name upon the screens, but you may perceive his initials on "the Block" itself, clumsily engraved (as it is averred) by his own fingers and a penknife while under punishment. A youthful earl lent him the indiarubber which it is usual to place between the teeth, lest any unmanly cry should be extorted. An immense section of the junior peerage assisted in subsequently applying the balsam—made up in the town for this especial contingency, and sold at 4s. 6d. the pot, with a reduction to bad boys who purchase a quantity—to the Lord Robert Fitzlollypop's wounds.

I have no doubt that the above circumstances, which I perfectly well remember, have long ago become a popular myth in the place where they occurred; but, as I have already said, this class of School Legend is rare. The youthful mind is less attracted to the Ludicrous than to the Terrible. No narrative can be constructed too horrible to please a boy. He is interested in the cannibal scenes of "Robinson Crusoe," but for a half-holiday, or Sunday reading, he opines there is no literary effort—take it all the way through—equal to "The Autobiography of Sawney Beane."

The ghastliest school legend I ever heard was at Mr. Poppleton's academy for young gentlemen from nine to fourteen years of age. I have since had reason to believe that some particulars of it were

borrowed from a dreadful incident that happened during the last century at the University of Cambridge, but all Poppleton's boys believed it to be original, indigenous, and true in every particular; and so, of course, did I. The discipline of the school was severe even in my time, but my Poppleton was said to have been an angel of mercy compared to his father, who presided over the establishment before him. In his latter days, however, his conduct had been almost Christian; he came in (to the educational business) like a lion, but went out like a lamb, in consequence of the following incident: A young gentleman—Bodger by name—had been sent to this school at the beginning of the Easter term; whereas, from his delicate constitution and nervous temperament, he ought to have been sent to a girl's school. The wicked Poppleton so terrified him, that he ran away the next day, but was overtaken by P. upon a pony, and brought back captive, it was averred, with a rope round his little neck. He was sent to his dormitory with the comforting remark to sleep upon, that on the morrow morning he would be caned to within an inch of his life; but no measures were taken for his security. It was thought the broken-spirited youth would not dare to run away again. When the morning came, however, no Bodger was to be found. The wicked Poppleton started off once more on ponyback with the rope, but *when he returned* in the evening he had nobody at

the end of it. The country was scoured, and a number of wandering little boys were taken up, but none of them the right one. Bodger's papa arrived post-haste on the fifth day of his son's absence, and "pitched into Poppleton" to that extent that there was no school for a week afterwards. There was even a vague report that Bodger *senior* had slain the common enemy; but the delight which that intelligence infused in every youthful bosom was only temporary. The head-master reappeared, but without his cane. His evil temper was subdued, and the boys took the greatest possible advantage of it. They chalked up, "Who killed young Bodger?" and "Who hid the body?" upon the palings round his private garden in the largest of Roman hands. On his front-door were once found the words, "Who ate him?" engraved so deeply that they had to be erased with a plane. And yet these terrible innuendoes were hardly less awful than the thing which had actually occurred. There was a certain room over the laundry where the boxes which the boys brought with them were kept until they went home for the holidays, and nothing else was kept there, so that it was not visited for months together. Into this apartment poor Bodger had fled, and shut himself up in his own box—which was dear to him, perhaps, as having come from his home. It was the story of "The Mistletoe Bough," with this sad addition, that he could have got out if he liked, for there was no spring-lock.

The unusual number of blue-bottle flies which came in and out of the room through a crevice in the door at last attracted somebody to the spot. This hideous incident was the thing most insisted upon by the narrators of the story, and considered most satisfactory by the hearers. We never saw a blue-bottle fly at Poppleton's without exclaiming, "Hooray, here's Bodger!" or something to that effect.

One very gratifying circumstance is to be observed concerning School Legends—namely, that they do not increase; they are the same that they used to be, although they never fail to please; and the reason of this is, we may fairly conclude, that the circumstances which gave birth to them no longer exist. Masters dare not now be inhumanly severe, and the cruelty of boys to one another is greatly mitigated.

SECOND FIDDLES.

OF all instruments, from the grand organ to the penny whistle, that which perhaps is held in least estimation among men is the Second Fiddle. Even those who play upon it themselves, now and then—and even oftener—no sooner perceive it in the hands of another performer, than they cannot conceal their contempt for it: it is not his execution that they find fault with, for, indeed, the better he understands his calling, the more they sneer, but that he should make use of that channel of melody at all. They pelt him openly with a number of opprobrious names—Toady, Snob, Fawner, Sycophant; they whisper to one another still worse epithets, for which they are indebted to the venerable Dean Swift; and at every note he evokes from his unpretentious violin they nudge one another's elbows.

Now, although, for my own part, I have always played upon an independent little Jew's-harp of my own, without aspiring to the instrument in question, yet I cannot withhold my admiration from the performers upon the second fiddle. Not only are they

the most diligent and persevering of all social musicians, unabashed by failure, and, if unhappily out of tune with their leader, endeavouring to remedy that defect with all meekness, but there is something pathetic, in my eyes, in their despised calling. There is a vulgar-looking person with a Pan's-pipe—but not healthily vulgar, only mean—who accompanies *Punch's* theatre, and does what he can with his commonplaces to rob that exquisite spectacle of its enchantments. Now and then he asks Mr. Punch a question, and elicits in reply a stinging epigram, in high falsetto, from the popular favourite, which sinks him lower than ever in public opinion. This degraded being, however, collects the money which is paid by the spectators, and doubtless keeps some of it for himself; whereas the musicians I have in my mind receive contempt without reward. All the money, as well as the adulation, is paid directly to the principal performer; it never touches the hand of him of the second fiddle even *in transitu*. There is surely something pathetic in this labour without pay or praise; in these struggles without any acknowledgment! It is not to be supposed, of course, that the public should go into raptures with efforts which, it is well understood, are directed solely to please the first fiddle; but when *he* evinces no satisfaction—and he scarcely ever does—I confess it makes my heart bleed. I am sure that if any gentleman would give himself up, soul and body, to the task of

making himself agreeable to *me*, that I should be at least affable and condescending. If he never contradicted me, and was always sanguine about what was going to happen, and continually expressed his belief that I was the most humorous writer now alive, I feel certain I should smile upon him in return. I never had but one admirer, a pointer-dog of the name of Jock, but I fully reciprocated his undeserved esteem. I would not have rejected his simple methods of ingratiating for a great deal of money. His dear old jaws used to nestle in my best waistcoats, and slobber them without the least reproof. When he died, I wrote his epitaph, and the esteemed relative to whom he belonged had the same engraved upon a tombstone, at an expense which, when the bill came in, I believe a little astonished him. I had nothing to do with *that*. Neither my actions nor my feelings with regard to that departed dog have given me since the least uneasiness. He faithfully played the second fiddle, and I was truly grateful to him for the accompaniment.

This gratitude is, however, far from common. I have had the misfortune to meet a certain literary person more than once whom to name would be to offend. Let every reader fill up the hiatus with any private enemy of his own who writes for bread and butter. This gentleman lived after his time. I say "lived," for, excepting in the sense in which genius is said to be immortal, he lives no longer. He ought to

have been the contemporary of Savage, but I am sorry to say he was mine instead. He was born to hector in a pot-house, and he accomplished his *rôle* whenever the opportunity occurred; when it did not occur, he generally managed to make the opportunity. In liquor, the subjects of his conversation were three: his family, his literary works, and himself; out of liquor—but as I only met him twice, I should have been fortunate indeed to have seen him in that condition; I only speak of what I saw. Remarkable as this man was for the above attributes (considering the epoch in which he flourished), he was still more noteworthy from the number of second fiddles which always waited upon him. If, being deserted by the gods, it struck you to ask this professor of the *belles-lettres* to dinner, the invitation had to be extended to certain lieutenants. Egotistic as he was, he could not perpetrate his solo without the assistance of their sweet voices. They led the conversation into an Ancestral channel, which introduced his Family; they discoursed of Literature, which introduced his Works; and finally, they proposed his Health, which introduced Himself. Conceive a Johnson, filled, not with genius, but with whisky, and “brought out” by several Boswells. The humiliation of the whole company—speaker, toadies, host, and guests—of course extended to myself; but amid my blushes, I did entertain a sentiment of pity *for the miserable* “led captains.” That old-world title

admirably suited with their condition. They were treated by their lord and master with a brutality only to be paralleled in the manners of two centuries ago. In the very act of subservience, they were snubbed by the voice of him to whom they tendered homage; they bent before him, and he set his foot upon their necks. I protest that a sympathetic shudder communicated itself to my own vertebræ. I could have forgiven the man his vulgar braggadocio; I could have placed his state of intoxication as a set-off against his bad manners; but when in his egotistic frenzy he tore his very parasites from their hold, and ground them with his heel, as they still clung, as it were, about his ankles, then I gave the wretch up, and hardened my heart against him for ever. A man that would thus shatter his own second fiddles would murder his mother. Surely, if there be any law of Compensation in human affairs, these unhappy Echoes will be one day given a voice of their own, and permission to use it.

Of course, the second fiddles who are professional persons stand on quite other ground. Even the Church does not disdain to employ such instruments in her harmonious cosmogony. In the place of worship in which it is my privilege to rent a few sittings, there are three of those inferior violins called curates. Their spiritual and temporal master, the rector, is understood to possess the gift of pulpit eloquence, and he

himself endorses the congregational opinion: it is as impossible for a young woman to be unaware of her beauty, as for a divine not to know that he is persuasive. If the former can get a plain female cousin to go about with her, so much the better; if the latter can procure a curate who has a slight impediment in his speech, his own orations derive advantage. The "delivery" of our rector is held to be particularly beautiful: of the three curates, one has a slight lisp; another has so weak a voice that he cannot be heard beyond the second pillar; and the third (doubtless from some conscientious motive) refuses to aspirate his "h's." We have had less decrepit specimens, and more satisfactory to the congregation at large, but somehow or other they have always failed to satisfy their superior. Some of them have been good-looking young fellows enough, with an earnest air and impressive manners; but the fact is that our rector was not anxious to retain these seraphines: he wanted second fiddles; and now he has got them, "which nobody (as the song says) can deny" who has ever listened to them. They read prayers when he is advertised to preach; they are only allowed to deliver a sermon at afternoon service, when few except nursery-maids are present; and, the bronchial tubes having before now proved the channels of clerical popularity, they are forbidden to have interesting diseases. An old pew-opener, who is a motherly sort of person, and has re-

commended some decoction of her own to the one with the weak voice, is the only individual beside myself who takes any interest in these young divines. As for me, their very appearance strikes me as infinitely more pathetic than our rector's most elaborate periods. I go to church in the afternoon by preference; and if any decoction would cure a lisp, or furnish a gentleman with a sufficiency of aspirates, I would procure it at any expense within my means.

Nature has put it out of my power to venture upon the perfidious seas without the most frightful results; therefore I can say nothing of my own knowledge about the second fiddles of her Majesty's navy. I am told, however, that there is a particularly large supply of that instrument to be found on board ship. These are made, too, upon a capital plan: they are reversible; upon one side, which is always presented to an inferior, they represent first fiddles. Thus the captain, except on the rare occasions when the admiral comes on board, sees nothing but second fiddles; whereas the powder-monkeys see nothing but first. A curious optical illusion.

I have also no personal experience of how this matter is managed at the bar; but from the published reports of law-cases, I should imagine that the second-fiddle system is there to be witnessed in perfection. "For the plaintiffs, Mr. Glib, Q.C.; Messrs. Singsmall and Nocount were also retained on the same side."

Mr. Glib, we read, made "a powerful appeal," which occupies a column and a half of the newspaper. "Mr. Singsmall made a few observations. Mr. Nocount followed." The observations are not printed, so that we do not know whither Mr. Nocount went. This want of public acknowledgment is to me excessively touching. I dare say the two juniors knew a great deal more about the plaintiffs' case than Mr. Glib, Q.C. I am quite sure they gave it a great deal more consideration. They talked of it, walking arm-in-arm under that wretched little portico which runs round * our Courts of Chancery; they discussed it on that neglected lawn where awkward squads of the Devil's Own are for ever taking their sad pleasure; and although they looked at the matter from every possible point of view, and exhausted it, they never hinted to one another, they never entertained in their own bosoms the desirability of cutting Glib's throat. These are the men that have *my* sympathy; and if I had a Chancery case to-morrow (which, I am thankful to say, I have not), I would instruct my attorney to let Singsmall have his chance. There is nothing mean or fawning about him; he is only possessed by a divine patience.

No eye, perhaps, that does not belong to a member of the faculty has ever witnessed a medical consultation between a family doctor and the Expert who has been called in at a crisis; the profession is bound

* Used to run.

to secrecy; otherwise, a very pretty illustration of our subject might, I should think, be borrowed from *that* source. These gentlemen always take lunch together, and both wine-glasses are made use of; but whether the inferior violin discourses any thin music—whether there is *consultation*, in short, or only didactic monologue, that is more than I can say. My own belief is that No. 1 makes some remark upon the quality of the liquor, with which No. 2 hastens to agree; that at the expiration of what No. 1 considers a decent interval, he winks, whereat the other smiles with intelligent subservience; then out they come in proper order, and with supernatural gravity, and the first fiddle remarks: "The case could not be left in better hands than those in which he found it: every remedy known to science has been employed, and the rest must be left to Nature." The appearance of No. 2 during these observations is that of a gentleman who is receiving knighthood from the blade of his sovereign. Altogether, the second fiddle medical is the least to be pitied of all that class of instrument.

I protest I would far rather be one of the above than any of the same description who belong, for instance, to the parliamentary band at St. Stephen's. You, my Radical friend, who demand not only to elect a representative, but to sit, perchance, in the Commons House yourself, you know not what you ask. It is possible that your own talents may entitle you to

a leadership; but there is your brother, at least, who is not equally gifted—let us take *his* case. He never gets to his attic, during the whole session, until two o'clock a.m. If he leaves the hall of senators before that time, the whipper-in is swiftly upon his track. He is given huge crude blue-books to devour, not for his own intellectual aliment, but for that of his chief; like a mother, who only consults the well-being of her babe, and avoids cucumber and pickled salmon, he must shun all pleasurable reading, and collect facts only to nourish another at second-hand. I would rather, for my part, feed a baby, if my sex permitted my so doing, than “cram” a minister of state with spoon-meat of this sort. In the one case, you do, at all events, get credit for what you do; whereas, in the other, what happens? you have the satisfaction of reading in the morning paper that your political master, “in reference to the internal affairs of San Marino, made one of those pellucid digests of our foreign policy with which his reputation is associated.”

This is not pleasant; but, as has been said, you may be second fiddle in any *professional* walk of life without discredit. You may be humble without cringing. It is only those who volunteer a symphony upon this despised instrument that are looked down upon. Rare as is playing upon the violin among females, not a few of them, such as Companions and Poor Relations, are compelled to adopt the second fiddle for a

livelihood; nobody, I hope, ventures to sneer at them for so doing. The hearts of all true gentlemen feel for these, and their hands fly to their hats. But when a male who could dig, and I should fancy would not be ashamed to beg, undertakes, instead, a menial situation of this kind, how that poor fellow gets despised! Even when he does not do it for a livelihood, but simply because it is his barnacle-nature thus ingloriously to adhere to a fellow-creature, what severe things, and especially by those who occasionally adopt the same line of business, are said of him! However, there is one bosom, within the waistcoat of the present writer, which entertains far other sentiments. When I hear the unambitious twanging of these genuine bass viols, my whole soul melts with pity. I cannot fancy a situation more deserving of a good man's tear. To live without sympathy is, we are told, exceedingly difficult; but to have to simulate it before a too discerning world, and towards a patron who perhaps treats it with ridicule after all—— Let my fellow-countrymen pity poor needlewomen, Poles, Female Blondins—I reserve *my* compassion for the second fiddles. Talk of negro bondage, why, negroes enjoy themselves occasionally. Some people lose their appetites for the whole day if they chance to see an ox overdriven, or a small dog set upon by a larger one: it is the humiliation of Man which spoils *my* dinner.

I have just seen one of the saddest sights, from this point of view, in all London. You have doubtless often beheld those private coaches-and-four—drags, I believe, they are called—which still haunt the park, and strive to resuscitate the last century. Well, there is one left in town even now, in this September month and of course there is a man to drive it. I find no fault with him whatever. If a being, who is intended to be a rational creature, derives pleasure from holding in one hand about a hundredweight of leather reins, by all means let him hold them. There are also two footmen, faultlessly attired, who sit with folded arms, serene, upon the hind-seat: they are only earning their livelihood. But besides these, there is, unhappily, a dependent swell, who sits next the driver, and who can surely derive neither pleasure nor profit from such a situation. He is as calm and majestic to look at as his companion, but it is impossible that he can be happy. *He* has no pride in the four “tits” which “spank along” so merrily; they are not his property; they are no amusement to him; he has no instrument with which to flick a fly off the near leader’s ear. There is some danger in his high position, but surely little glory. The very grooms cast supercilious glances at him from under their cockaded hats. The coach, with the inside blinds up, as though it contained a corpse, is a striking sight; an empty carriage *with four horses* to draw it may excite the interest of

the economist, as an example of waste of power: the driver's science may possibly evoke from the passing moralist some such quotation as—

“A Grecian youth of talents rare,
Whom Plato's philosophic care
Had formed for virtue's nobler view,
By precepts and example too,
Would often boast his matchless skill
To curb the steed and guide the wheel.”

But as to the poor fellow to the left of the box-seat, he interests nobody but me; he spoils nobody's dinner except mine. Nobody inquires Who he is, or What he is, for everybody knows—He is a Second Fiddle.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BOOKS.

How unequally are what are called the Realities of Life distributed! Hunger and Cold, and their opposites, Plenty and comfortable Warmth, form the chief experiences of the vast majority of the human race, and constitute all they know, or almost all, of adversity or of prosperity. Whereas, with the minority, how little do these matters enter into their minds. They take no thought for the morrow, what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, nor yet for their garments, what they shall put on; for they have never felt any lack of such things. Their very prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," has no literal signification. Again, how material is the existence of the illiterate rich, compared with that of the studious, or even the refined. Hunting and Shooting, or the pleasures of the Town, comprehend nearly all the narrow round of life of the former; an existence, however, at least practical and active. On the other hand, it is astonishing to reflect how little of what is termed *real life* falls to the lot of the latter.

One who is fond of literature, even though he may not be a student, is not—knowingly—in this world above a third of the actual number of his years. Eight of his daily hours are given to sleep, and eight at least—what with reading and reflection—are passed in a world peopled by the creatures of the imagination. No astronomer, whose patient mind is so set upon the wonders of the skies that his familiarity with them is greater than with the things of the earth, is more unsphered—more separated from actual life—than is the boarding-school miss entranced by the pages of a novel. She is sitting upon the sea-shore, perhaps, the cynosure of neighbouring eyes; her future husband may be regarding her critically through a spy-glass, from the far-off jetty; her mother may be sitting by her side, pretending to knit, but secretly absorbed in admiration of her beloved daughter, and full of plans for her future. The round of life goes on around her. The fisherman is returning from his nightly labours upon the deep, or mending his nets upon the strand. Parties of pleasure are setting forth upon horseback or in boats. The church-bell is tolling on the hill. A great ship is passing by, crowded with emigrants, to meet her doom, perhaps, somewhere in yonder illimitable sea. But the girl with the book is conscious of none of these things, whether they concern herself or others. She is living in another scene, under other circumstances, and surrounded by quite a different set

of people. She is no longer a boarding-school miss, home for the holidays. She is married to a man who is laying schemes to murder her; or she is the murderess herself, full of the direst plans; or she is an old woman, calmly dying, with her dear ones around her, and it is the parting with them, but not the meeting with death, which makes her weep. She does not *seem* to be plotted against, or to devise wicked schemes against others, or to die; but she actually *is* for the time in one or other of those very circumstances. Those are real tears which course down her beautiful cheeks, and fall upon the enchanted page. No one can seriously aver, except in the most physical sense, that while the charm holds her, the girl is a denizen of this world at all. She is alive, indeed, for her blood circulates, and her bosom falls and rises, but she is alive to nothing on earth. The scenes about her never existed; the people about her are not even shadows, like Mr. Pepper's ghosts—they are only shadows of shadows, reflections from imaginary forms; and yet, while she reads, her existence is passed among them solely. It is not necessary to make any strictures here upon the wickedness of novel-reading. There are some novels, of course, which would do that girl more harm than opium, and much in the same way—clogging the wheels of action, and making the whole human machine unfit *for the plain high-road of life*; and there are others,

again, which, condensing the knowledge of human life into a few pages, impart the wisdom which a hundred personal experiences might be too few to teach her; or, again, which, setting before her the example of high and steadfast purpose, of duty and of charity, invigorate and fortify the soul. What I would speak of now is merely the engrossing and all-absorbing quality of books. Reflection itself, of course, possesses the same attribute, in a less degree; but we cannot sit down to reflect at a moment's notice—deeply or earnestly enough to forget what is passing around us—and be perfectly sure of doing it, any more than we can be sure of going to sleep when we wish to do so.

Now, a congenial book can be taken up by any lover of books, with the certainty of its transporting the reader within a few minutes to a region immeasurably removed from that which he desires to quit. The shape or pattern of the magic carpet whereon he flies through space and time, is of no consequence. The son of science is rapt by a problem; the philosopher by an abstruse speculation; the antiquary is carried centuries back into the chivalric past; the lover of poetry is borne upon glittering wings into the future. The charm works well for all. Books are the blessed chloroform of the mind. We wonder how folks in trouble did without them in old time, just as our descendants will wonder how men and

women and children bore to see their limbs sawn off without the Lethe-balm which the mere smelling at a sponge can bestow. Action was not always possible, even to the warrior, and still less to the warrior's wife; there were years of peace; there were long nights—nights, too, of unmitigated darkness—wherein their sorrows must have made themselves felt indeed; yet they could never “take up a book”—a phrase in common use among even those of us who are least given to reading—and while the dreary hours away. It is not a very high claim that is here set forth on behalf of Literature—that of Pass-time, and yet what a blessed boon even that is! Conceive the hours of *inertia* (a thing different from idleness) that it has mercifully consumed for us! hours wherein nothing could be done, nothing, perhaps, be *thought*, of our own selves, by reason of some impending calamity. Wisely does the dentist furnish his hateful antechamber with books of all sorts. Who could abide for an hour in such an apartment with nothing to occupy his thoughts save the expectation of that wrench to come! Whatever makes you forget an impending surgical operation—even though it be tooth-drawing—will make you forget anything. This may seem derogatory to the majesty and disinterestedness of the human mind, but it is undoubtedly true. A great and wise man has told us that no philanthropist *would be* so much kept awake at night by the news

that the empire of China, with its third of the human race or so, had been swallowed up by the sea, as by the knowledge that he was to have the tip of his *own* little finger amputated before breakfast.

And, indeed, it must be confessed that where Books fail as an anodyne, is rather in cases of physical than of mental pain. Through the long watches of the night, and by the bedside of some slowly dying dear one, it is easier to obtain forgetfulness—the only kind of rest that it may be safe or possible to take—by means of reading, than to do so when one is troubled with mere toothache. Nor does this arise from selfishness—since we would endure twenty toothaches, if they might give ease to the sufferer—but because the sharpness of the pang prevents our applying our mind to anything else; while the deep dull sorrow of the soul permits an intervening thought, and over it slides another, and then another, until a layer of such is formed, and the mind of the reader gets wholly free, for a brief but blessed time, partitioned off, as it were, from his real trouble.

Grief must have its way, but not *all* its way, and there is a time when even the consolations of Religion may be intermitted with advantage, and the heart be suffered to lie fallow, wholly disengaged from any subject that concerns itself. This is not the place to speak of the supreme blessedness of the Book of

Books; but the benefits which *it* imparts are totally different from, as they are infinitely greater than, those which flow from books in general. True, it mitigates, comforts, elevates—works unspeakable good every way—but it does not prevent that self-consciousness, the abrogation of which we are just now alone considering, so much as do other kinds of books, into which, perhaps, devotion hardly enters at all.

I am writing of the obligation which we owe to Literature, and not to Religion; yet I cannot but feel “thankful”—using the word in its ordinary and devotional sense—to many a book which is no sermon, nor tract, nor commentary, nor anything of that kind at all. Thus I have cause to revere the name of Defoe, who reached his hand down through a century and a half to wipe away bitter tears from my childish eyes. The going back to school was always a dreadful woe to me, casting its black shadow far into the latter part of my brief holidays. I have had my share of suffering and sorrow since, like other men, but I have seldom felt so absolutely wretched as when, a little boy, I was about to exchange my pleasant home-life for the hardships and uncongenialities of school. Vain, as black Monday approached, were the increased tendernesses of my mother; the “treats” devised to cheat me of forebodings dire; you might as well have spread a banquet for some wretched

doomed one upon the scaffold, and asked him to sit down and eat, forgetful of "the drop," because you had covered it decently with a damask tablecloth. And yet, I protest, I had but to take up "Robinson Crusoe," and in a very few minutes I was out of all thought of the approaching calamity; Dr. Birch and his young friends (who were not mine) loomed no more in the near horizon. I had travelled over a thousand leagues of sea; I was in my snug well-fortified cave, with the ladder upon the right side of it, "so that neither man nor beast could get at me," with my half a dozen muskets loaded, and my powder distributed in separate parcels, so that not even a thunderbolt should do me any irreparable injury. Or, if not quite so secure, I was visiting my summer plantation among my goats and corn, or shooting, in the still astonished woods, birds of marvellous beauty; or lying upon my stomach upon the top of the hill, watching through my spy-glass the savages putting to sea, and not displeased to find myself once more alone in my own little island. No living human being could just then have done me such a service as dead Defoe, unless, perhaps, it had been Dr. Birch himself, by dying opportunely, and thereby indefinitely proroguing that fatal reassembling day.

Again, during that agonizing period which intervened between my proposal of marriage by letter to

Jemima Anne and my reception of her reply, how should I ever have kept myself alive, save for the chivalrous aid of the Black Knight in "Ivanhoe"? To him, mainly, assisted by Rebecca, and (I am bound to say) by that scoundrel Brian de Bois Guilbert, are my obligations due, that I did not—through the extremities of despair and hope suffered during that interval—become a drivelling idiot.

When her answer did arrive—in the negative—what was it which preserved me from the noose, the razor, or the stream, but Mr. Carlyle's "French Revolution"? In the woes of poor Louis Capet I forgot my own; in the just indignation of his unhappy wife,* I ceased to dwell upon the cruel manner in which Jemima Anne had "led me on;" and, finally, in the narration of Carrier's "Noyades," that false maiden sank from my memory, wholly "scuttled," so to speak, in the tide of rushing Loire. Who, having a grateful heart, can forget these things, or deny the Blessedness of Books? If it were only for the hours of weary waiting which they have consumed for me at desolate railway stations, I pay them grateful homage. But for them, I should have gone mad with the contemplation of Time Tables, and advertisements of *Thorley's Food for Cattle*, and BEDS, *sent free by post*, scores and

* "*Vous êtes tous des scélérats*," cried she to the Municipal Guard through her woman's tears.

scores of times; but for them, I should have been worse even than I have been upon many a packet's deck, for it is good to keep one's mind employed when the physical interior is menaced with anarchy and general overturn; but for them, the hours would often have dragged very drearily with me when flying on the wings of steam—yet far too slowly—towards home, and wife, and children.

Nay, under far more serious circumstances, when disappointment has lain heavy on my soul, and once when ruin itself seemed overshadowing me and mine, what escape have I not found from irremediable woes in taking the hand of Samuel Johnson (kindly introduced to that great man by Mr. Boswell), and hearing him discourse with wondrous wisdom upon all things under heaven, sometimes at a club of wits and men of letters, and sometimes at a common tavern table, and sometimes even in an open boat upon the Hebridean seas.

I often think, if such be the fascination exercised by books upon their readers, how wondrous must be the enchantment wrought upon the Writers themselves! What human sorrow can afflict, what prosperity dazzle them, while they are describing the fortunes of the offspring of their own imagination? They have only to close their study-door, and take their magic pen in hand, and lo! they are at once

transported from this weary world of duns, and critics, and publishers, into whatever region and time they will. Yes, truly, it is for authors themselves, more than for any other order of men whatever, to acknowledge the Blessedness of Books.

THE END.



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